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THE MELODRAMA IN FRANCE FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE BEGINNING OF ROMANTIC DRAMA

1791 - 1830

Dissertation submitted to the Board of University Studies of the Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

James Frederick Mason

TO MY MOTHER

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Preface.

The word melodrama is used in the present monograph in the broad sense of popular tragedy. In France, modern popular drama did not arise until the time of the Revolution. Before 1789 the necessity of providing theaters for the populace was not recognized. The only form of amusement permitted the lower classes of society was the pantomime. The Comédie-Française, like many another institution of the monarchy, was a monopoly, controlling the drama, holding the rights of performance of all the plays in the classical repertory, and possessing the power to prohibit the performance of tragedy and comedy on any other French stage. Under such restraint any form of popular drama was impossible, but after the declaration of the freedom of the theaters by the National Assembly in 1791, the condition of the théâtres du boulevard was radically changed. Popular drama was then able to develop

and to become adequate to the needs of the people and suited to their education and intelligence. The Comédie-Française was no longer able to hamper the smaller theaters of the capital and to prevent them from catering to the tastes of their audiences. The managers of these theaters recognized the fact that they could not successfully adopt or adapt classical tragedy or middle-class comedy, because they realized that in the plays of Racine, Corneille, Diderot, and Sedaine there were lacking certain characteristics absolutely essential to any play intended for the humbler classes of society. Consequently they decided to retain the traditional pantomime and to introduce into it those changes which the new conditions permitted. In a comparatively short time they developed from pantomime a type of popular drama so successful that it has continued with but few and unimportant alterations to the present day. Before the Revolution the 'Fourth Estate' with its lack of political power and its absence of education had found amusement in the buffoonery of Pierrot and Cassandre, but after the events of 1789, it demanded something better than this

puerile pantomime scarcely above the puppet-shows of the children of to-day. The farce of the pantomime was changed into a serious comedy, or tragedy with a happy ending, the stereotyped characters were dropped, and the coarseness and obscenity were replaced by a naive morality and sanguine optimism so often characteristic of a post-revolutionary period. The first modifications in pantomime antedate the Revolution by fifteen years, the period, 1791 - 1800, was one of transition during which the managers and authors of the various popular theaters in Paris carried on experiments in order to determine what was best suited to their audiences, and after 1800, with the restoration of peace and order, popular tragedy appeared in its definitive form under the name of melodrama.

Since its origin the melodrama has held full sway in all the popular theaters of France and England, as well as of those of other countries, and yet, in spite of this long period of success of the melodrama, there has been very little change in either form or content. The plots and the dialogues of the melodramas of the Empire are almost identical with those of to-day. The early melodramatists so well understood the psychology of their audiences

that their successors have been able to make any advances over these melodramas which from 1800 to 1830 made Pixérécourt and his fellow-authors popular heroes and which enriched the managers of the Théâtre de la Gaîté and the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique. The early melodramatists like their illustrious predecessors, Molière and Shakespeare, often combined the duties of stage-manager and author. Since the melodrama was intended solely for a popular audience, the question of style and psychological analysis was neglected in order that all the attention might be devoted to making the costumes and scenery elaborate, the music attractive, and the plot long and exciting. For this reason the many melodramas which have come down to us from the time of the Empire and the Restoration do not bear reading. They were hastily and carelessly written by men of small learning and their momentary success was measured solely by the box-receipts. In the absence of a literary coterie and the lack of subvention from the state, these theaters devoted to the melodrama were wholly dependent upon popular approval for their very existence. The melodrama could advance only as the taste of its audiences became more refined. For thirty years after its origin the material conditions were such that the melodrama was forced to remain, as it had been at the beginning, a

in French tragedy. Other critics who deplored the taste of an age which preferred the melodrama to Corneille and Racine accepted after much hesitation the views of Geoffroy. The upper classes who began to frequent the theaters of the Boulevards for the purpose of ridiculing the melodrama, soon found that these humble dramas were not wholly to be condemned. The ideas in the preface to Cromwell and their exemplification in Henri III et sa cour and Hernani were perfectly familiar to the Parisians long before that memorable twenty-fifth of February, 1830. The initial performance of Pinto, the fourth of Germinal, year VIII, had been a revelation to the conservatives of the Comédie-Française; in 1830, however, the point of issue was the propriety of the melodrama, hitherto confined to the small theaters, entering the maison de Molière. The success of Hernani marks the advent of the melodrama into literature, With this change of theater the genre itself underwent certain changes, verse was substituted for prose and drame romantique used instead of mélodrame. The latter term was too closely associated with the boulevard de Crime to appear upon the bills of the Comedie-Francaise, and the partisans of the new school were only too fearful

popular, non-literary genre.

Although the early melodrama was outside the pale of literature, it exerted a most important influence upon the purely literary drama. The period extending from the Revolution to the production of Henri III et sa cour (1829) and Hernani (1830) is one of the most barren in the history of the Comédie-Française ; comedy was barely kept alive by Colin d'Harleville and Andrieux, and tragedy in the hands of servile imitators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was moribund. Lemercier recognizing the poverty of contemporary drama, had attempted a reform, but being misled by his zeal to break too abruptly with the traditions of the Comédie-Française he obtained no success. Even the patronage of a Napoleon was unable to keep classical tragedy alive, and night after night the Comédie-Française was empty. The popular theaters, on the contrary, were crowded and their success was so great that they attracted the attention of conservative newspapers, such as the Journal des Débats and the Journal de Paris. Geoffroy, the staunch classicist, who by his diatribes against the pseudo-classical drama of his time became one of the most hated dramatic critics of the Empire, was the first to recognize not only that the melodrama was perfectly adequate as a popular drama, but also that it contained the germs of a revolution

lest the conservatives should draw invidious comparisons between the plays of the Boulevards and romantic drama. In spite of this change of name, the dramas of Hugo and Dumas stand in close relationship to the melodrama, and Hernani marks the culmination rather than the beginning of the new genre. As M. Faquet has already pointed out, (1) romantic drama was already thirty years old when Dumas and Hugo achieved their success. Otherwise the period dating from Hernani to the Burgraves seems incredibly short. Romantic drama originated in the melodrama at the end of the Revolution, and after remaining for thirty years in a popular form at the small Parisian theaters, became a literary genre with its entrance into the Comédie-Francaise in 1830.

Within recent years several critics have noted the importance and the influence of the early melodrama.

(1) E. Faquet, Propos de Théâtre, vol, III, p. 225.

Brunetière considered the plays of Pixerécourt a most important factor of pre-romantic drama. He says, "Si, d'ailleurs j'ai cru devoir vous parler de Pixérécourt, c'est que le ' roi du mélodrame ' a exercé, Messieurs, une bien plus grande influence qu'on ne croit. Non que ses mélodrames vaillent aujourd'hui grand'chose. Mais, d'abord nul ne s'est inspiré plus que lui des souvenirs de l'histoire nationale. Et comme il les a choisis généralement atroces, il a ainsi habitué l'imagination populaire à la représentation effective de ce que le crime a de plus sanguinaire. La nature de ses succès en ce genre a même inquiété les pouvoirs publics, et nous lisons dans un Arrêté de la Commune de Paris sur la police des théâtres : 'Le grand principe de ne pas ensanglanter la scène est mis constamment en oubli et la scène ne cesse pas d'offrir le spectacle hideux du vol et de l'assassinat. Il est à craindre que la jeunesse, habituée à de telles représentations, ne s'enhardisse à les réaliser, et ne se livre a des désordres qui causeraient sa perte et le désespoir des familles ....." Je ne doute point, pour ma part, que les faiseurs de mélodrames, en créant dans les esprits une disposition générale à gouter l 'invraisemblable, le merveilleux, et l'horrible, ne les aient accoutumés à ne

pas s'étonner d'entendre plus tard des 'pas dans les murs' ; à croire aux effets du 'poison des Borgia' ; et à ne frémir que modérément des quatre incestes et des deux parricides de la tour de Nesle". (1) Des Granges, also, in his excellent work upon the dramatic criticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century entitled, Goeffroy et la critique dramatique sous le consulat et l'empire, has called attention to the influence of the melodrama. "Il n'entre pas dans notre plan de faire l'histoire du mélodrame—histoire dont devrait se préoccuper, beaucoup plus que de Shakespeare ou de Goethe, toute enquête sur les origines du drame romantique." (2) M. Faguet has touched upon the influence of the melodrama several times. In one passage especially, he outlines a tentative plan for a study of the melodrama.

(1) Brunetière, les Epoques du Théâtre-Francais p. 347.
(2) Des Granges, C. M. Goeffroy et la critique dramatique sous le consulat et l'empire, Paris, 1897 ; p. 409.

"Etudier Pixérécourt, Cuvelier, Caigniez, Ducange, et quelques autres, d'un peu plus près, comme précurseurs des romantiques et surtout comme créateurs du gout public qui a rendu le théatre romantique possible, ce qui expliquerait peut-être pourquoi le théatre romantique a eu une carrière si courte, ayant été plutot la fin éclatante de l'évolution d'un genre nouveau ; étudier et debrouiller un peu cela serait singulièrement interessant. (1)

These citations alone are sufficient to show the importance of the melodrama and the necessity of a study of the subject.

In spite of these suggestions by such eminent critics no monograph or work on the history of the melodrama appeared until 1900 when M. Jules Marsan published in the Revue d'histoire litteraire de la France an article entitled le Mélodrame et Guilbert de Pixérécourt. The purpose of the present monograph is to study the history of the melodrama in greater detail than was possible in the brief article of M. Marsan.

(1) Op. cit., p. 225.

The most important source used in the preparation of this monograph has been the melodramas themselves, most of which are to be found in pamphlet form at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris. The more successful of the early melodramas may be found in two collections, Chefs-d'oeuvres du répertoire des mélodrames published in thirty volumes at Paris in 1825 and Pixerecourt's Théâtre choisi published in four volumes at Nancy in 1841-3. Another invaluable source has been the newspapers of the period, especially the Journal des Débats and the Journal de Paris and the many short-lived, theatrical almanacs and reviews dealing with the actors and the new plays of each year. In my use of the newspapers I have followed the excellent example of M. Des Granges who in both his Geoffroy et la critique dramatique sous le consulat et l'empire and la Presse littéraire sous la restauration has clearly demonstrated the utility and the importance of the newspapers at the beginning of the nineteenth century as sources for the literary history of the period. (1)

(1) Cf. La Presse littéraire sous la restauration: introduction, De l'utilité des journaux pour l'histoire littéraire.

Besides my indebtedness to the more general treatises of MM. Brunetière, Faguet, and Lanson, I have found most valuable the previously mentioned works of M. Des Granges. The suggestive article of M. Marsan has been indispensable. For the history of the small theaters of Paris, M. Albert's les Théâtres de la foire and les Théâtres des Boulevards have proved very useful. For questions concerning romantic drama, constant reference has been made to the recent work of M. Nebout, le Drame romantique and to MM. Paul et Victor Glachant's Théâtre de Victor Hugo. For Dumas, père, and his relation to the melodrama some use has been made of M. Parigot's work, le Drame d'Alexandre Dumas. The period discussed in this monograph has been limited by 1791, the date of the freedom of the theaters, and by 1830, the date of Hernani.

CHAPTER I

The Antecedents of the Melodrama

The history of the popular theaters of Paris during the eighteenth century is one long continued struggle for freedom. Since the aristocacy and the middle classes had been able to express themselves through certain forms of the drama, the people asked the same right. Classical tragedy, with its refinement and classical allusions, meant nothing to those who could hardly read. The situations and the problems of the Cid and Phèdre were too remote from the interests of those who stormed the Bastille. "Nos plus belles tragédies n'interessent pas le peuple," wrote Mme. de Staël. (1) The drame bourgeois was even more unpopular. Diderot, in his attempt to bring

(1) De l'Allemagne, II, 15; de l'art dramatique.

the drama near to every-day life robbed the stage of much that was dear to the heart of the people. The audiences of the small theaters, even where they failed to comprehend fully the style noble, preferred its majesty and sonority to the triteness of the every-day conversation in le Père de famille and le Fils naturel. The pomp and ceremony of royalty held their interest much more than a vinegar merchant and his cart. They considered the theater as an escape from the barrenness and tedium of ordinary life, which was far too prosaic to be reproduced on the stage. Spectacular play and exciting plot followed by a happy ending are indispensible elements to any popular drama, and all these were to be found in pantomime. Consequently, for the greater part of the eighteenth century, this form of dramatic amusement satisfied the people. When they grew fonder of the theater and more regular in attendance they tired of the general similarity and the constant repetitions of the pantomimes. The efforts of the small theaters to meet this demand for something better began the evolution of pantomime which ended in melodrama.

The purpose of the present chapter is two-fold : first, to show the evolution of the old type of pantomime, through the stages of pantomime

historique ou romanesque and of pantomime dialoguée; secondly, to trace the history of the word melodrame from its original meaning of 'opera' in general to scène lyrique to pantomime with dialogue.

I. Pantomime with dialogue.

When Parliment in 1548 took away from the Confrères de la Passion the right to give mystery plays, France lost the only popular national theater she ever possessed. During the Renaissance the partisans of the foreign tragedy imported from Italy urged the king to take drastic measures to stifle popular drama, because they feared lest this native product should develop into a formidable rival of classical tragedy. When the Hôtel de Bourgogne was added to Molière's troupe in 1680 and the combined troupes invested with the exclusive privilege of giving plays in Paris, popular drama was effectively suppressed for a hundred years. During this century the Comédie-Francaise and the small theaters were engaged in a long struggle which ended with the complete victory of the latter in 1791. The royal actors were inconsistent, cruel, and unjust toward their humble rivals. At

first, the censorship was rigid and any theater which ventured to give anything besides pantomime and puppet-shows met with harsh treatment. A certain Bertrand, for example, who in 1690 substituted actors of flesh and blood for his marionettes, saw his theater promptly demolished by the police. Just before the Revolution, however, when the privileged troupes such as the Comédie-Francaise and the Opéra needed funds, the Théâtre de la Gaîté and the Theâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique were sometimes able to bribe the authorities into allowing them a short scene of dialogue or even a comedy, but the demands for money soon became so frequent and exorbitant that, they were forced to give up the struggle and return to pantomime and puppet-shows enlivened by acrobats, tight-rope walkers, and performing animals.

The forains, as the actors of these small theaters which sprang from the théâtre de la foire were called, met with much success during the eighteenth century, in spite of the attacks of their powerful rivals. Men of no less importance and ability, than Lesage and Piron became playwrights for these mimes of the Boulevards. Arlequin figured in all possible roles from Arlequin invisible

and Arlequin amoureux to Arlequin défenseur d'Homère. (1) The pantomimes contained in the ten volumed edition of le Théâtre de la foire published in 1737, at Paris, by Lesage and d'Orneval, show the wide range of subjects presented. The forains were so ingenious that they even used to good advantage some of the difficulties which confronted them. "On devra à leur (les acteurs forains) entêtement, à leur ingénieuse tactique, à leur esprit inventif, nos modernes théâtres des boulevards, et de nouveaux genres dramatiques, tels que le vaudeville, le monologue, la pantomime, la revue, d'autres choses encore." (2) For example when all dialogue or monologue was prohibited, necessity suggested pièces à écriteaux in which the audiences, instead of listening to speeches spoken by the actors, read them from placards suspended over their

(1) Cf. Le Théâtre de la foire, Maurice Drach, Paris, 1889

(2) Albert, les Theatres de la foire, p. 19.

heads. This form of entertainment became famous with Lesage's Arlequin, roi de Serendib (1713). When only monologue was allowed, Piron amused all Paris with his three-act monologue-comedy, Deucalion Arlequin (1722). As the forains grew more successful, they began to erect permanent buildings to replace the tempory wooden structures. Fashion found its way to the foire which was permanently settled on the Boulevard du Temple. Geoffroy replying to the critics who took him to task for devoting too much attention to the small theaters, remarked upon this change in the audiences : "Il n'est pas inutile d'observer que ces théâtres (ceux de Nicolet et d'Audinot) voués à la farce, et destinés aux dernières classes du peuple, ont été dans les dernières années de la monarchie française, les théâtres de la bonne compagnie et du bon ton". (1) Even the Court desired to see these humble amusements and ordered Audinot, the manager of the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique to bring his troupe of child-actors, whom he had recently substituted for marionettes,

(1) Journal des Débats, June 18, 1803.

to Choisy. The Mémoires de Bachaumont for the year 1772 contain an interesting account of this performance before the king. "En 1772, madame du Barry qui cherchait tous les moyens de distraire le roi, que l'ennui gagnait aisément, avait imaginé de faire venir Audinot jouer à Choisy, avec ses petits enfants. C'est la première fois que ce directeur forain passait devant S. M. On a donné d'abord : Il n'y a plus d'Enfants, petite comédie en prose d'un sieur Nougaret, où il y a de la naïveté, mais des scènes d'une morale épurée, puis la Guinguette, ambigu-comique de M. Plainchesne, image riante et spirituelle de ce qui se passe dans les tavernes, un joli Teniers. On a fini par le Chat Botté, ballet pantomime de sieur Arnould; on n'a pas même oublié la Fricassée, contredanse très polissonne. Madame Du Barry s'amusait infiniment, et riait a gorge déployée, le roi souriait quelquefois." (1) After this visit Audinot received permission to use the title, Théâtre des comédiens de bois de Sa Majesté. The title was a misnomer, since his child actors could hardly be

(1) Cf. Brazier, Chroniques des petits théâtres de Paris, (reprint of d'Heylli), vol. I. p. 59.

termed comédiens de bois but Audinot did not dare call the attention of the Comédie-Francaise and the Opéra to the fact that he had discarded his marionettes. In the same year Audinot's rival, Nicolet, was allowed to add to the dignity of his acrobats and tight rope walkers by the use of the name Spectacle des grands danseurs et sauteurs du roy. This popularity and prominence of the theaters of Audinot and Nicolet troubled the Comédie-Francaise which spent much time in devising methods of persecuting the two managers.

The status of the small Parisian theaters upon the eve of the Revolution was somewhat as follows. Nicolet at the Théâtre des grands danseurs du roy was giving acrobatic and tight-rope performances and a few short comedies. The Opéra which in 1784 had been placed in control of the small theaters and dance-halls of the capital, in order to increase its income, allowed Nicolet, upon the payment of 24,000 livres almost as much liberty as he desired. The Comédie-Francaise, however, insisted that the Opéra should not permit him to touch the repertory and that his comedies should not bear too striking a resemblance to those given at the Théâtre-Français. The royal players even encouraged indecency and licentiousness, in order that the difference between their own performances and those

on the Boulevards might be more marked.(1) In their desire to degrade and humiliate Nicolet and his troupe they even demanded that a tight-rope and a spring-board should always be on the stage to keep before the minds of the audience the humble origin of the theater. Salle, at the Théâtre des Associés enjoyed even more liberty than Nicolet and was allowed to give the plays of Mercier and those of amateur authors too timid to expose themselves to ridicule at the Comédie-Francaise. Earlier, Sallé had gained some notoriety by his farcial presentation of well known plays. "Pendant un temps, on permettait aux petits spectacles de donner des pièces du répertoire de Théâtre-Français, mais en changeant les titres, et en les faisant précéder de marionettes. Ainsi Zaire était apelée le Grand-Turc mis à mort ..... le Père de famille s'appelait les Embarras du ménage ; Beverly, la Cruelle passion du jeu. (2) At the Bearnolais child-actors, who had replaced the original marionettes, acted a pantomime while adults recited the accompanying dialogue from the wings. One of the earliest

(1) Brazier, op. cit., p. 57-8

(2) " " " p. 88.

translations of Shorigan's Rivals was performed in this manner. At the Délassements-Comiques the authorities allowed only three actors to perform and even these three were required to act behind a gauze curtain. At the other small theaters there were similar restrictions quite as unjust and unreasonable as those at the Beaujolais and the Délassements-Comiques. The most successful and the best-known of all of these small theaters, the Theatre de l'Ambigu-Comique, formerly the Théâtre des comédiens de bois de Sa Majesté avoided all these humiliating restrictions by confining itself to pantomime in which genre it soon became renowned. "Ses plus beaux succès sont dus à la pantomime ; nulle part on n'approche de l'ensemble et de la perfection avec laquelle on les exécute chez Audinot. L'orchestre y est estimé, la danse n'y est pas mauvaise ; quelques auteurs y sont fort bons." (1) The enterprise of Audinot and his helpers soon began innovations in pantomime which finally developed into the melodrama.

Pantomime has always flourished in Romance countries since the time of Augustus

(1) Almanach général de tous les spectacles, année 1791, p. 172 (the plays cited were given in 1790).

when Maecenas' freedman, Bathyllus, became the most popular mime of all Rome, and since the reign of Nero, when the emperor himself was proud of his histrionic abilities in pantomime. Roman actors of the Empire ever attempted to act in pantomime the plays of Sophocles and Euripides to the accompaniment of a chorus. France had inherited the love of pantomime from Rome and had received from Italy the original form of pantomime which consisted of a slight plot with much improvisation and buffoonery, and the sterotyped characters of Arlequin, Gilles, Colombine, Cassandre. The acting was accompanied throughout by instrumental music which was frequently made up of popular airs. The plots were entirely lacking in novelty and invention ; Cassandre, after changing her affection from Arlequin to Gilles, finally returns to her first lover. The popularity of this Italian pantomime, after having endured for many years, was now beginning to wane and therefore the small theaters found it necessary to add new features to this entertainment in order to hold the attention of their audiences.

Audinot, of the Ambigu-Comique was the first to begin to change the character

of Italian pantomime. Being possessed with most of the essential qualities of a theatrical manager, he was above all keenly alert to a change of taste in his audiences and anxious to cater to their love of novelty. The manner in which he became a manager of a small theater shows the temper and the ingenuity of the man. He began his career as a tenor at the Italian Opera in Paris, but, angered at the refusal of his fellow-singers to produce his opera, le Tonnelier, he resigned his position and sought vengence upon his former associates by establishing a puppet-show in which all the puppets were easily recognized caricatures of those who had failed to praise his work. The Parisians, with their love of satire, appreciated the trick of Audinot, whose puppet-show at once sprang into popularity. After the novelty of these caricatures had gone, Audinot replaced them with child-actors who in turn gave way to adults and then he began to give pantomimes of the Italian type. Audinot, possessing little ability as an author, soon associated with himself a young man named Arnould. Arnould whose real name was Jean-François Mussot, had begun the study of law in compliance with the wishes of his family, but the temptation of the stage proving too strong, he ran away and joined the troupe of the Prince de Condé, of which Audinot was the director. Like Poquelin, Mussot took a pseudonym to save the family honor.

Audinot was impressed by the ability of Arnould and urged him to join his troupe at the Ambigu-Comique. After joining Audinot's company, Arnould began writing pantomimes in the old style, le Chat botté (1770), and le Villageois clairvoyant (1771), and short comedies mixed with vaudeville. In 1774, he won great success with la Complainte de Barnecides, a parody of one of La Harpe's tragedies. In 1775 he became associate-manager to Audinot and after that wrote the majority of the pantomimes given at the Ambigu-Comique.

The first important change in pantomime occurred in 1779 when Arnold in an attempt for something original wrote an historical pantomime, entitled les quatre Fils Aymon. In the preface to this work, the author holds up to ridicule the old Italian pantomime then in vogue at Paris. "Il est de ces pantomimes sublimes qui, comme l'éternité, n'ont ni commencement ni fin, et dont l'action principale consiste dans une vingtaine de coups de sifflet qui font mouvoir à vue autant de machines. La beauté et la multiplicité des décorations, l'éclat des habits, une multitude innombrable d'incidens entassés les uns sur les autres ; une musique bruyante et sans cesse, une infinité de gestes souvent inintelligibles, ou qui n'expriment rien, une quantité de ballets bien ou mal amenés, n'importe ; voilà ce qu'on appelle du delicieux, du merveilleux, du, etc. : on y court, on s'y porte en foule

on s'y extasie, et l'on finit par ce cri devenu si commun ; bravo ! bravissimo ! Si quelque personne, moins enthousiaste, s'avise d'en demander la raison, on lui repond brusquement qu'on n'en sait trop rien ; mais, qu'à tout prendre, c'est la belle chose du monde". (1) In order to avoid this inanity, Arnold took as the subject of his plot, not the foolish intrigues of Pierrot and Cassandre, but an incident drawn from the early history of France. With some display of erudition he quotes his source, the Histoire des quatre fils Aymon, très-nobles et très vaillants chevaliers and asks indulgence for certain changes which he found necessary to make in order to "conformer aux bienséances théâtrales". The action begins with the arrival of Charlemagne at the Château de Montauban and his preparation for taking vengeance upon the sons of Aymon for the murder of his nephew Berthelot. The first few scenes are enlivened by fights, retreats and

(1) A copy of the original pantomime is at the Bibliothèque Nationale, but being bound in a collection of eighteenth century operas (Recueil d'opéras francais Fb (19551-62), it is not noted in the catalogue.

the taking of prisoners on both sides. Roland unsuccessfully attempts to bring about a reconciliation and the battle continues until the climax is reached in the last scene when Charlemagne, about to behead Claire, sees her husband, Regnaud, on the point of killing Roland. The old emperor at once declares a general amnesty and thereby saves the hero of Roncevaux. The pantomime concludes with a 'divertissement' consisting of ballets and military drills, and ending very familiar to the audiences of the Boulevard. The serious plot of les quatre Fils Aymon marks a great advance in pantomime, yet we must not be misled by Arnould's preface, into believing his pantomime to be entirely different from that of his predecessors. In this preface of Arnould, as in those of forty years later, there is some discrepancy between theory and practice. The spurious title 'pantomime historique' is almost a misnomer, for, with the exception of somewhat doubtful historical personages, all is pure fiction and the interest of the audience was probably centered in the stage battles, the dances, the elaborate staging and costumes rather than the episode of their national history. (1)

Arnould did not make any great advance in les quatre Fils

(1) Cf. Albert, M., les Théâtres de la foire (Paris, 1900) p. 272.

Aymon, but he opened the way for the use of any serious subject as the plot of a pantomime. The idea of finding dramatic materials in the history of France was perhaps suggested by de Belloy's patriotic drama, le Siège de Calais (1765). Arnould's next historical pantomime, Jérusalem délivrée, ou Renaud et Armide, based upon episodes of Tasso's poem, was given at the Ambigu-Comique in the same year as les quatre Fils Aymon. These historical pantomimes possessed one serious defect ; the plots, being so long and complicated, were often unintelligible to the spectators, who, to understand the action, were forced to rely upon the printed programs. When, as in the case of modern opera, the attention of the audience is divided between the stage and the libretto, the dramatic interest is always lessened. At the Ambigu-Comique before the Revolution, this annoyance of learning the plot from the program was much greater than it would be at present, because many of the audience did not read with any great fluency.

To remedy this defect of historical pantomime Audinot, probably with the aid of Arnould, wrote Dorothée, pantomime à spectacle in which not only was the plot

extremely simple, but any confusion was avoided by the use of printed signs similar to the 'écriteaux' of the early eighteenth century théâtre de la foire (1) With Dorothee the sentimental element entered pantomime. The beginning of the few lines of poetry on the title page suggests the nature of the subject and shows that the influence of the 'homme sensible' had penetrated even to the small Parisian theaters.

"O vous sensibles coeurs, qui ne rougissez pas
D'écouter la Nature, et de verser des larmes ;"

Some of the lines in the preface, which is addressed to 'mothers and young women', continue in the same strain with the addition of a lofty moral tone so characteristic of the future melodrama.

L'amour récompensé, la vertu triomphante,
Dans les bras de l'époux, son épouse innocente
Et son enfant chère, le bonheur de tous deux,
Gage de leur hymen, et de leur foi constante
Par une vive emotion,
je vois vos ames s'attendrir
Les pleurs de la compassion.
Le cri du coeur, la voix de la Nature.

(1) Cf. p. 5.

Since no mention is made of the source of the plot of Dorothée Audinot and Arnould apparently invented the pathetic story of the heroine. The pantomime begins with a scene of rural festivity in the midst of which Dorothée repulses the mayor of the village because of his importunate lovémaking. The indignant mayor brings forward a false accusation against the girl and causes her to be put in prison. The second act takes place in prison where the mayor visits the girl and endeavors to win her heart. At the beginning of the third act the unfortunate Dorothée is seen tied to a stake bearing the inscription :

"La belle Dorothée
Au feu sera jetée
Si la valeur d'un Chevalier loyal
Ne la recourt de ce brasier fatal."

The mayor at the head of a company of soldiers appears with a large flag in his hand bearing the inscription ;

Je jure que de Dorothée
Sa perte est meritée

Si quelque audacieux
Veut prendre sa querelle
Et combattre pour elle,
Qu 'il s'offre à l'instant à mes yeux."

The 'preux chevalier' in the person of Dunois, arrives as opportunely as the Knight of the Swan, kills one of the soldiers and rescues the heroine who is about to be consumed by the flames. At this critical moment Dorothée's husband who is the general of the regiment staticned in the village, rushes upon the scene and, when he has heard the story of the attempted crime of the mayor, orders his immediate punishment and bursts into tears of gratitude as he thanks the hero. The pantomime ends with dancing and merrymaking. The story of Dorothée, although much simpler than that of les quatre Fils Aymon, was still too complicated for pantomime and the dumb acting of the people on the stage had to be supplemented by the use of the inscribed banner.

Dorothée marks an important step in the development of pantomime because of its naturalness and its pathos.

The problem of making a serious pantomime perfectly intelligible to the audience without recourse to either programs or 'écriteaux,' was finally solved by Arnould in his famous Maréchal-des-logis, the plot of which was based, not upon national history or a fictitious episode, but an incident familiar to the majority of the people who frequented the small theaters. Several newspapers of the time had brought into renown a young quarter-master, because of the heroism which he had displayed in rescuing a young girl from robbers. (1) Brazier has given us an interesting account of this successful pantomime. "Mais une pantomime qui y obtint un de ces succès comme on en voit peu, était le Maréchal-des-logis. Une aventure arrivée dans la forêt de Villers-Cotterets, en avait fourni le sujet. Une jeune et jolie fille la

(1) Cf. Le Journal historique et politique, vol. XXIV. p. 514, and le Journal encyclopédique, vol. IV, p. 528.

traversait seule, quand elle fut arrêtée par deux voleurs qui, après lui avoir pris tout ce qu'elle possédait, la garrottèrent à un arbre, pour lui faire sans doute souffrir de plus affreux traitments..... ; mais par bonheur, un brave marechal-des-logis des dragons de la reine, qui se rendait en semestre, ayant entendu les cris de la victime courut à elle, mit les voleurs en fuite, détacha la jeune fille, et la reconduit respectueusement à ses parents. Cette belle action, inserée dans toutes les gazettes, retentit jusqu'à la cour. La reine voulut voir son dragon on le lui presenta : il recut de Marie-Antoinette un accueil très touchant, et une somme avec laquelle il acheta son congé et se maria avec la charmante fille qu'il avait sauvée par son courage. Tout Paris alla verser des larmes au Maréchal-des-logis, je crois même que le héros assista en uniforme à plusieurs représentations." (1)
The superiority of this pantomime over its predecessors is obvious, its simplicity, its directness, and morality made it quite suitable to a popular audience. M. de Monthyon, founder of the well-known 'prix Monthyon' is said to have written a letter to the managers of the Ambigu-Comique, commending them for the high moral tone

(1) Brazier M. Chroniques des petits théâtres de Paris, Vol. I, p. 63-64.

of this pantomime. (1) Arnould had at last succeeded in carrying on the plot of a pantomime without recourse to extraneous means. Arnould, however, was too ambitious to be satisfied with the success of le Maréchal-des-logis and he next conceived the idea of transferring the scene of action from France to some distant foreign country. l'Héroine americaine brought before the audience of the Ambigu-Comique a strange land with extraordinary costumes and peculiar usages. Arnould's quasi-pedantic manner appears in the prefaces where, as in the case of les quatres Fils Aymon, he quotes as his source, l'Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Europeens dans les deux Indes and again his departures from historical fact were 'nécessitiés par l'action théatricale'. The theater-goers of the Boulevard had probably never heard of this historical work with such a long title and, provided they were amused, were wholly indifferent whether the plot was based upon fact or fiction.

(1) Histoire de l'Ambigu-Comique, p. 43 ; Barbier, Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes, gives the name of F. Deligny as the author.

The anecdote of this pantomime contains many dramatic possibilities and the ending is not as patent as in Dorothée and le Marechal-des-logis. The point of the story turns upon the ungenerous treatment of a young Indian girl at the hands of an Englishman. Two Englishmen, who are cruising among the West Indies in quest of slaves, are suddenly attacked by the natives and one is killed and the other taken prisoner. An Indian girl aids the prisoner to escape and in return for this generous action is sold by him as a slave. Just as the girl is being taken to the slave-ship, the chief of her tribe arrives and rescues her from her captors. The pantomime ends with the departure of the Englishman, 'le coeur déchiré par ses remords' and with a noble gesture on the part of the chieftain which according to the program, intends to signify that he 'voue une haine éternelle à lui (l'Anglais) et à sa nation". The exotic details of l'Héroine américaine were apparently received with favor, because in the same year Arnould wrote la Mort du capitaine Cook. Even Mérimée could hardly have surpassed the wealth of local color in this pantomime, which, with its realistic and striking costumes and scenery, eclipsed anything the Boulevard had yet seen. France had made the accquaintance

of the courageous captain and read the account of his death in Demeunier's translation, which, under the title of le troisième Voyage de Cook, had been published in 1785, the year before Arnould wrote his pantomime. "On s'est proposé", Arnould writes in his preface, "d'offrir sur la scène un spectacle vraiment neuf et singulier, et qui offrit en même temps quelque interêt. La mort tragique du capitaine Cook, assassiné pas les insulaires qu'il comblait de bienfaits, a paru réunir tous ces avantages..... et l'on sent bien que les convenances théâtrales ne nous ont pas toujours permis de suivre la vérité à la rigueur..... Nous l'avons rendue le mieux qu'il nous a été possible, dans le costume, les moeurs, les danses des sauvages de la mer du Sud." The program of the pantomime is filled with native words and descriptions of the native costumes. "La scène est dans l'Ile d'O-Why-E". The leaders of the savage tribes bear strange names such as Oki, Etoë, and Emaï ; small boats are called pirogues, the cemetery moraï and the volcano which furnishes the background of the scene, is always spoken of as la montagne brûlante. The natives rub noses as a sign of greeting, all the details of their funeral ceremonies are carefully noted and their costumes described as follows : "jeunes sauvages à demi-nus , les cheveux flottants, bouclés et peints de différentes couleurs,

la tête chargée de grains de verre, de plumes rouges de très beaux coquillages." The plot is imitated from that of l'Heroine américaine . Captain Cook is brutally murdered by some of the savage chieftains, whom he had treated very kindly. In one important particular la mort du captaine Cook differs from its predecessors, the ending is unhappy. The audiences of the Boulevard excused this dehouement in la Mort du Captaine Cock, because of the many other attractions which it offered but before the Revolution as well as after, they preferred a happy ending with the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue.

From these few pantomimes we may gain some idea of Arnould's activity and of his importance in the development of the genre, from a nonsensical farce into a sericus drama. Among the various types of pantomime which he invented, the most important are the historical pantomimes as represented by les quatre Fils Aymon, the romanesque by Dorothée, the contemporary by le Marechal-des-logis and the exotic by la Mort du captaire Cook. Arnould was a prolific writer and has left us many examples of each type. L'Homme au masque de fer was a very success-

ful historical pantomime concerning the man in the iron mask. Arnould supposed this personage, whose identity has so troubled historians, to be the Comte de Vermandois, a natural son of Louis XIV. The pantomime, unlike Dumas' romance, ends with the prisoner's escape and a general reconciliation. In la Forêt noire, a child-actor plays the leading role of a six-year old lad, who, after having been kidnapped by thieves, converts his captors and their persuades his parents to abandon the idea of puhishment. Infantile actors were no novelty to the Ambigu-Comique which, as we have already seen, (1) possessed at one time no adult actors, but here in la Forêt noire the character of the child begins to assume the important role of innocent victim and conciliator of enemies which he later occupied in so many of the melodramas. In le Vétéran ou le boucheron déserteur (1786) the plot is similar to that of le Maréchal-des-logis ; Saint Aman, a deserter who has taken the disguise of a wood-cutter, saves Elize from robbers and Elize in return persuades the authorities to accept his heroism in saving her as an atonement

(1) Cf. p. 12

for his desertion.

Arnould continued to write pantomimes similar to these until his death in 1795 when he left as an heritage to the theater for which he had worked so hard, a large ~~amount~~ number of pantomimes and vaudeville-comedies. (1) Although Arnould's contemporaries disliked him, they did not fail to ascribe the success of the pantomimes at the Ambigu-Comique to his zeal and intelligence and to his careful training of the actors. Arnould prepared the way for the greatest of the melodramatists, Pixerécourt, he gave pantomime a serious plot, an upright, moral tone, and by his attention to the staging and costumes made the whole as attractive as possible. He was the first author on the Boulevard to discover what were the requirements of a popular drama. During the early part of the nineteenth century, many of his pantomimes were reprinted and several were changed into melodramas by the addition of a few monologues and some dialogue.

(1) A partial list of his works is given in Michaud's Biographie generale and the manuscript Dictionnaire des ouvrages dramatiques of Henri Duval, now at the Bibliothèque nationale.

Les quatre Fils Aymon, for example, was given both as a pantomime and a melodrama. The pantomime seemed to have reached perfection: "Ceux qui ont vu le Capitaine Cook, le Masque de fer, conviendront qu'il est difficile de donner à ce genre plus de perfection." (1) No further development in the drama of the popular theaters was now possible, until dialogue was allowed.

The small theaters of Paris obtained their long desired liberty the 13th of January, 1791, when the National Assembly gave forth a decree which placed all the theaters of Paris, on the same footing and made them all equally free. The first two articles of this decree are especially important. "Tout citoyen pourra élever un théâtre public et y faire représenter des pièces de tout genre, en faisant, préalablement a l'établissement, sa déclaration à la municipalité." "Les ouvrages des auteurs morts depuis cinq ans et plus sont une propriété publique et prévent, nonobstant tous anciens privilèges,

(1) Almanach des spectacles, 1792.

qui sont abolis, être représentés sur tous les théâtres, indistinctement." (1) When the news of the passage of this decree reached the Boulevard, there was much rejoicing at the small theaters over this severe blow dealt the Comédie-Française. At the Théâtre des Délassements-Comiques, where a gauze curtain had to be hung between the audience and the actors, the curtain was quickly torn away by the joyful spectators. This rejoicing did not last long, because the small theaters soon discovered that complete liberty had its disadvantages. With the rapid increase in the number of theaters, competition became so keen that even the oldest houses on the Boulevard were unable to open their doors every day. The small theaters also soon found that their newly acquired liberty was more apparent than real and that, to be allowed to remain open, they must play very skillfully the part of the political turn-coat. The directors of the changing

(1) Cf. Albert, M., Les Théâtres des Boulevards, p. 67.

governments of France at that time were often more tyrannical than the Comédie-Française. The position of the theaters in any Revolution is always precarious. "~~Le moyen d'être calme avec la fièvre~~". In 1793 the National Convention decided to use the theaters for the purpose of political propaganda. "La convention nationale a décrêté dans sa seance d'avant hier : 1° qu'à compter du 4 du présent mois jusqu'au premier septembre prochain, il sera donné trois fois par semaine sur les théâtres designés par la municipalité, des pièces qui font aimer la liberté comme Caius Gracchus, Brutus, Guillaume Tell, et aux frais de la République ; 2° que tout theâtre où il sera donné des pièces tendant à corrompre l'esprit public, à ramener à l'amour de la royauté seront fermés et les propriétaires arrêtés." The narrow interpretation which was placed upon the second clause in this decree sometimes gave the managers of the small theaters much trouble but, in spite of this political censorship, and of the competition, ever the managers felt that they had gained a great deal when they became free to use dialogue.

Previous to the Revolution the small theaters had been very little concerned about the political condition of the country, but after 1789 no form of the drama could remain uninfluenced by the great political upheaval at the time. The Comédie-Française suffered more than

any other theater of the capital. After losing all its privileges the troupe broke up into two factions, the rouges and the noirs The members of the latter, the more conservative group, were cast into prison because of a harmless performance of Paméla, August 29, 1794 and Collot d'Herbois' prophesy, "La tête de la Comédie-Française sera guillotinée et le reste déporté," was about to be fulfilled when Robespierre fell. The condition of anarchy, which reigned in the drama during the Revolution, is thus described by two contemporaries : "Les ouvrages révolutionnaires, joués sur les théâtres, peuvent être regardés comme les thermomètres de l'esprit, qui animait le gouvernement d'alors, aussi, à mesure que nous approchons de ces temps malheureux, qui ont étendu un crêpe sanglant sur la France, l'oubli de toutes les circonstances, de toutes les vertus, de toutes les affections les plus douces règnera dans la plupart des ouvrages de circonstances, dont nous serons obligés de parler, quoi qu'il nous en coûte pour surmonter le dégoût que nous éprouverons en fouillant dans cet amas impur d'abominations." (1) Plays such as le Couvent, les Victimes cloîtrées,

(1) Martainville et Estienne, Histoire du Théâtre-Français pendant la Révolution, (Paris, 1802): vol III, p. 20. Cf. Welschinger, H., Théâtre de la Revolution (Paris, 1877) ; Moland, L., Theatre de la Révolution (Paris, 1880); Pougin, la Comédie-Française et la Révolution (Paris s.d.).

Encore un curé, l'Epoux républicain, la Papesse Jeanne, show by their very titles that the drama had become a very servile handmaid to politics. After the ninth Thermidor l'Intérieur des comités révolutionaires, le Souper des Jacobins, Les Assemblées primaires, exposed the abuses of the Directory but made no advance in literary form. This unfortunate condition of the Comédie-Française as a forum for the discussion of political ideas came to an end May 31,1779 when the two sections of the troupe united and gave at the first performance le Cid and l'Ecole des maris. The eighteenth Brumaire was a turning point in the history of the Comédie-Française because Napoleon was not only fond of classical tragedy but also anxious to restore to this venerable theater its pristine glory. (1) With the ascendency of Napoleon, the Comédie-Française

(1) Cf. Muret, Histoire par le théâtre, vol, I. p. 233: "Lorsqu'une partie de la Comédie-Française alla jouer à Erfurt, en septembre et octobre 1808, voici quels ouvrages y furent représentés : Cinna, Andromaque, Mithridate, Iphigénie en Aulide, Zaïre, Britannicus, Oedipe, Rhadamiste, Rodogune, Mohomet, le Cid, Bajazet, Horace, Manlius, Phèdre. Certes, on ne saurait trop approuver chez Napoléon, ce goût du grand et du beau."

began to recover its ancient privileges and finally, June 12, 1803, entered the service of the Emperor with a performance of Esther at Saint-Cloud to which all the ministers and ambassadors were invited. Henceforth the troupe was much better than it had been for over half a century previous. In spite of the many vissitudes through which both the country and the theater had passed, the plays at the Comédie-Française differed in no respect from those before the Revolution ; the Emperor brought the masterpieces of the seventeenth century back into favor and encouraged the writing of new tragedies and comedies along orthodox and traditional lines. The Revolution with all its dramatic possibilities, its color, excitement and violent changes of fortune, was not utilized for purposes of the drama. "Le drame et l'épopée qui étaient partout sauf dans la littérature," perhaps needed none of the embellishments of poetry and drama.

The popular theaters, on the contrary, felt the influence of the Revolution very deeply. First of all, the people who frequented them were in a state of constant excitement and hysteria and so accustomed to scenes of horror and blood-shed in the streets of Paris that they demanded a drama full of terror and blood-curdling incidents. Even in the midst of these awe-inspiring plays

contemporary theatrical newspapers raised a cry of protest. " On se plaignait, avant la révolution, du ravage qui causoit, dans l'art dramatique, l'amour exclusif des choses exagérées ; c'est bien pis aujourd'hui que toutes nos idées sont à l'esprit de vin, et que, depuis le matin jusqu'au soir, nous sommes dans une irritation perpétuelle au physique comme au moral. Des prisons, des cimetières des lampes sépulcrales, des cris funèbres, du sang, des échaufauds ; voilà ce qu'on nous offre pour nous distraire de nos douleurs et de nos chagrins. Il sembleroit que les auteurs eussent coujuré avec les factieux pour nous tenir sans cesse dans un état d'agitation, d'angoisse ou de fureur. (1) Even the titles of the plays which were then being given on the Boulevard, Frédégilde, ou le demon familier, Blanco, ou l'homme invisible, l'Enfant du mystère , le Moine, terminé par l'enfer de Milton furnish some proof that the following description was not without some foundation; "Des diables ou des voleurs

(1) Journal des théâtres, March 6, 1792.

des voleurs ou des diables et souvent même tous les deux ensemble : telle est en peu de mots l'histoire actuelle des petits théâtres de Paris et même de quelques-uns des grands, où ce detestable goût commence à pénétrer." (1) The minds of the populace of Paris were in such an abnormal state that the desire for the strange and the peculiar, for stories of devils, ghosts and imps in the midst of scenes of battle and murder seemed unsatiable. Even the acting and the staging was exaggerated and realistic. According to le Courier des spectacles a performance of la Forêt périlleuse was almost stopped by women, who, frightened at the sight of so much blood shed, were screaming and leaving the theater.

While the people and the nation were in this morbid state, craving for strong and thrilling sensations, they found certain forms of contemporary foreign literature congenial reading. Both England and Germany, in their literature, if not in their governments, showed radical and revolutionary tendencies. The influence of the

(1) Melpomène et Thalie vengées, au VII, p. 22.

literature of these two countries will be discussed in a separate chapter but for the sake of continuity a brief mention must now be made of this influence. From Germany came Schiller's Raüber, a play teeming with revolt against society and convention, which, in Lamartelliere's translation, was very successful for a long time after its initial performance at the Théâtre du Marais, 1792. During the last half of the eighteenth century, there had arisen in England a school of novelists of the extreme romantic type ; Horace Walpole and his successors, Anne Radcliffe and Lewis, had catered to a very numerous class of readers who never tired of lengthy and absurd fictions about monks, nuns, robbers, ghosts, and haunted castles. France soon acquired a liking for these highly colored novels, which, after being translated and published in large editions, were dramatized for the use of the small theaters. Walpole's Castle of Otranto, Anne Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho, and Lewis' Monk were all turned into very successful plays. The Journal des Débats described Victor ou l'enfant de la forêt, a play of this highly romantique type as, "un drame sombre, horrible, diabolique, fantomique, en un mot, l'encyclopédie de tous nos drames muets." (1) When political conditions became more normal this exaggerated romanticism began to disappear, and long before Hugo's Spanish bandit

(1) An VIII, 21 vendémiaire.

appeared upon the stage of the Comédie-Française, the popular theaters had adopted almost exclusively historical and domestic subjects for their plays.

The form of these popular plays at the time of the Revolution varied greatly. The most common type closely resembled the pantomimes of Arnould, the only difference being the use of dialogue. The term 'pantomime dialoguée', which was current at this time, explained exactly this new popular drama. Fabien Pillet, who was especially bitter against the small theaters, attacked both the name and the genre. A pantomime with dialogue by Cuvelier entitled C'est le diable ou la bohémienne was thus criticised by him : "Je demanderais à l'auteur, si je le connaissais, ce que c'est qu'une pantomime dialoguée : il me répondrait sans doute: c'est le diable. Je lui pourrais objecter qu'une pantomime dialoguée n'est ni une pièce ni une pantomime, mais une espèce de monstre. Il me répliquerait peut-être : que m'importe ? J'attire la foule, j'ai réussi Il pourrait avoir raison ; mais à coup sur je n'aurais pas tort." (1) Most of the pantomimes dialoguées

(1) Melpomène et Talia vengées, an VII, p. 67.

deserved equally severe criticism but, in one respect as Pillet himself admitted, they were worthy of notice. "L'Enfant du malheur, pantomime qui fait courir tout Paris, et du succès de laquelle je ne suis pas étonné après l'avoir vue. Ce n'est pas qu'elle mérite par elle-même, car il n'y a pas de sens commun, comme il est l'usage dans toutes les pantomimes des Boulevards ; mais elle plaît par ses accessoires, le nombre et l'éclat de ses décorations, et en général par la manière dont elle est exécutée. Il est une vérité dont il faut convenir, c'est que les petits spectacles sont infiniment supérieurs aux grands dans le soin qu'ils apportent dans les représentations dramatiques qu'ils donnent; ils respectent le public pour accaparer son argent au lieu que les autres comédiens veulent avoir l'argent du public, sans se mettre en peine de le satisfaire ; ils crient à l'injustice quand, rebuté par leur mesquinerie, il les abandonne, tandis qu'ils ne devraient s'en prendre qu'à eux seuls de son indifférence."

One of the earliest and most interesting examples of pantomime dialoguée is le Baron de Trenck of Mayeur de Saint-Paul, which was first produced several years before the beginning of the Revolution. The fact

that this pantomime with dialogue was given at a time when the small theaters were not allowed to use dialogue is somewhat difficult to explain. First of all, Baron de Trenck is probably an unique example of the use of dialogue in pantomime before 1791 and then it must be noted that it was so written that it could easily be given without the use of spoken words and still be intelligible to the audience. It was probably played at a time when the authorities were receiving bribes from the popular theaters and so the use of dialogue was permitted. The preface of Mayeur de Saint Paul is worthy of citation not only because in it the dramatist explains how he happened to write a'pantomime dialoguée' but also because his statements regarding the origin of the hybrid genre bear such resemblance to those of Pixérécourt upon the beginning of the melodrama.(1) The first concern of Meyeur de Saint-Paul, as of the majority of the French dramatists, even to the present day, was the question of the unities. " J'ai bien vu que je ne pouvais conserver les règles qu'impose Aristote, qu'il fallût me priver des trois unités. Alors je me suis trouvé arrêté. Mais réfléchissant que nos meilleurs auteurs lyriques avoient souvent réussi en secouant ce joug, et enhardi par leur exemple, j'ai travaillé ; et nombre

(1) Cf. p 72

de nos lecteurs verront aisément au rithme de mes vers, et à la faiblesse du style, que cette pièce était destinée à être mise en musique. Mais un léger inconvénient m'ayant empêcher de faire représenter mon ouvrage sur un des premiers théâtres de la capitale (dont j'ai tant à me louer de l'honnêteté des premiers sujets), je me suis décidé à la faire jouer sur un théâtre subalterne, où j'ai dû, en partie, mon succès au jeu de l'acteur chargé du rôle de Baron de Trenck." (1) With the exception of the dialogue Mayeur de Saint Paul's pantomime differs in no respect from the historical pantomime of Arnould. The plot is simple, the number of acts three, the ending happy and the moral lesson prominent. Mayeur de Saint Paul states in his preface that the first object is to put upon the stage a picture of <u>la vertu souffrante et malheureuse</u> which finally overcomes all difficulties. The subject of the pantomime is a conspiracy against the Baron de Trenck. He is cast into prison because of the false accusation of Colonel Thinski but soon is able to

(1) Cf. p. for Pixérécourt's account of origin of melodrama.

escape by the aid of two faithful soldiers. In the end the innocence of the hero is established and after a general reconciliation the play ends as usual with drills and dances. A short passage from the third act will illustrate the manner in which Mayeur de Saint-Paul interrupted the music by dialogue.

"Tronck,

Ce bienfait de mon Roi me devient plus flatteur
Depuis que l'amitié partage mon bonheur. ———

Air : Déjà la trompette guerrière (8mesures)

Qu'il est doux pour un guerrier
Brûlant de l'amour de la gloire
De cueillir un beau laurier
Dans les champs de la victoire. ——— (7 mesures)

Tristen

Sa valeur est son bouclier
Son nom vit dans la mémoire ——— (4 mesures)

Thinski (à part)

Il ignore la tempête
Que je dirige contre lui ;
Si le Roi me croit aujourd'hui
Elle éclatera sur sa tête. ——— (8 mesures)

The author intended that the actors should carry on a pantomime during the musical interludes. For the music sometimes certain well-known airs were designated, sometimes only the nature of the music was suggested as for example 'un air de combat', 'une musique brillante', 'air d'action', or 'sur un air qui peint la félicité générale'. The interruptions of the dialogue were so numerous that the action must have been carried on almost exclusively by pantomime. The Baron de Trenck was given at the Ambigu-Comique for the greater part of a year and became almost as famous on the Boulevard as le Maréchal-des-logis. Mayeur de Saint-Paul's experiment of combining dialogue and pantomime, however, was a failure for the time being, because no play similar to le Baron de Trenck was seen on the Boulevard until after 1791.

In the newspapers and theatrical almanacs of the period le Baron de Trenck is spoken of either as a pantomime, or a pièce dramatique. The Ambigu-Comique advertised it as a pantomime because it did not wish to call the attention of the authorities to the use of dialogue. After 1791 any pantomime in which dialogue was used was spoken of as a pantomime dialogué, an awkward and self-contradictory term, which shortly after 1800 was replaced by the word, mélodrame. For the first few years of the nineteenth century both terms were used simultaneously, as for example in a theatrical almanac

for 1802 where the critic writes ; "J'ai vu douze pantomimes dialoguées, appelés mélodrames". (1) Before 1800 mélodrame was used sporadically in the sense of pantomime with dialogue. Moline was perhaps the first to use the word in this sense in his Michelin, ou l'humanité récompensée, mélodrame en un acte, (1790) but since his so-called melodrama was not played except in a small town of Brittany his use of the word was not generally known. Another instance of the use of the word is found in Rosny and de la Rochelle's Adonis, ou le bon nègre, mélodrame en 4 actes, year VI. Since we may regard these two instances of mélodrame being used for pantomime dialogué before 1800 as exceptional, and since we know that mélodrame had acquired its new meaning by the year 1802, we can date the change of name of popular drama during 1800 and 1801. To explain why the word mélodrame was adopted, it will be necessary to trace the history of this word during the eighteenth century.

(1) Coup de fouet, ou revue de tous les théâtres de Paris, 1802, p. 42. Cf. Année théâtrale, 1803 ; force grandes pantomines ou, comme on les appelle aujourd'hui, des mélodrames."

II. The 'scène lyrique'.

During the last two decades of the eighteenth century mélodrame was a synonym of scène lyrique. Like pantomime with dialogue, the scène lyrique was a combination of instrumental music and spoken words. Rousseau's Pygmalion is the only successful example of the genre in France. Popular manuals and encyclopedias have often stated that Pygmalion was the beginning of popular melodrama. Even Geoffroy, in his hatred for the Genevan philosopher, claimed that the decadence in the drama might be traced to the author of le Contrat social. "Tout le monde connaît la scène lyrique de Pygmalion premier germe de nos mélodrames. Qui l'eût cru que ces tragédies des Boulevards avoient pour père un aussi fameux philosophe que Jean-Jacques Rousseau ?" (1) An examination of Pygmalion and the few feeble imitations of it will readily show how little responsible Rousseau is for the melodrama. It is possible that Mayeur de Saint-Paul in le Baron de Trenck (2) and Molino in Michelin (3) were consciously

(1) Journal des Débats, Aug. 28, 1805.

(2) Cf. p. 40. (3) Cf. p. 43.

or unconsciously imitating Pygmalion, although neither of them mentioned Rousseau but it is quite certain that the scène lyrique, after it had received the name, mélodrame disappeared and the name was then passed on to pantomime dialogué.

Rousseau wrote Pygmalion under the following circumstances. About the middle of the eighteenth century a quarrel arose in Paris as to the respective merits of French and Italian music. Since French opera had not yet become successful, it was urged that France should abandon the idea of a national opera and adopt the music of Italy. Rousseau seemed at first to be in favor of a national school of French opera, and apparently wrote the words and music of his Devin du village (1753) as a convincing argument against the adoption of Italian opera. His opera was very successful and he himself seemed pleased with the praise of the critics and the generous reward which the king and queen bestowed upon him after they had heard the work. Then with one of those abrupt and apparently inconsistent changes so frequent in his life, he abandoned the idea of national opera and, in the same year in which he wrote le Devin du village, he published in his Lettre sur la musique

française an abusive attack upon French opera, which he contended was impossible of development because the French language, when sung, was harsh and disagreeable. "Je crois notre langue peu propre à la poésie et point du tout à la musique." Later in his Observations sur l'Alceste de M. Glück he expressed the same views ; "Persuadé qua la langue française, destituée de tout accent, n'est nullement propre à la musique et principalement au récitatif, j'ai imaginé un genre, dans lequel les paroles, et la musique, au lieu de marcher ensemble, se font entendre successivement, et où la phrase parlée est en quelque sorte annoncée et préparée par la phrase musicale. La scène Pygmalion est un exemple de ce genre qui n'a pas eu d'imitateur. En perfectionnant cette méthode, on réunirait le double avantage de soulager l'acteur par de fréquents repos, et d'offrir au spectateur l'espèce de mélodrame le plus convenable à sa langue. Cette réunion de l'art déclamatoire avec l'art musical ne produira qu'imparfaitement tous les effets du vrai récitatif, et les oreilles délicates s'apercevront désagréablement du contraste qui règne entre le language de l'acteur et celui de l'orchestre qui l'accompagne ;

mais un acteur sensible et intelligent, en rapprochant le ton de sa voix et l'accent de sa déclamation de ce qu'exprime le trait musical, mêle ces couleurs étrangères avec tant d'art, que le spectateur n'en peut discerner les nuances. Avec cette espèce d'ouvrage, on pourrait constituer un genre moyen entre la simple déclamation et le véritable mélodrame, dont il n'atteindra jamais la beauté." (1)

Pygmalion, this first attempt at reforming French opera, was written by Rousseau in 1762. At first it was performed in the drawing rooms of his friends and did not become generally known until after he wrote his Observations sur l'Alceste de M. Glück. It consists of a monologue which is frequently interrupted by instrumental music. The subject is the animation of the statue of Galatea at the prayer of Pygmalion. (2) The scene represents the sculptor's studio, where, in the midst of tools, marbles and statues, is the beautiful

(1) Oeuvres complètes de Rousseau, (ed. H. Furet, Paris) 1826 vol. XIV, p. 70.

(2) Ovid, Metamorphoses V. ll 243-328.

statue of Galatea. After the sculptor's rapturous monologue, the miracle takes place and Galatea utters a few words. At the pauses in the monologue, the actor expresses his feelings and his state of mind by means of pantomime to the accompaniment of the orchestra. For example, after the overture and several interludes by the orchestra Pygmalion beseeches the goddess of love to animate his masterpiece, to give it both a living body and a soul. "Deux êtres manquent à la plénitude des choses, partage-leur cette ardeur dévorante qui consume l'un sans animer l'autre ; c'est toi qui formas par ma main ces charmes et ces traits qui n'attendent que le sentiment de la vie ; donne-lui la moitié de la mienne, donne-lui tout, s'il le faut, il me suffira de vivre en elle ..... Déesse de la beauté, épargne cet affront à la nature qu'un si parfait modèle soit l'image de ce qui n'est pas." Then follows an interlude by the orchestra, while the actor goes through a pantomime. Pygmalion, who with mallet and chisel in hand is about to make an alteration in the statue, suddenly stops as he feels a vibration in the marble.

"Quel tremblement! quel trouble! Je tiens le ciseau d'une main mal assurée ..... je ne puis ..... je n'ose ..... je gâterai tout.

(Il s'encourage ; et enfin, présentant son ciseau, il en donne un seul coup, et, saisi d'effroi, il le laisse tomber en poussant un grand cri.)

Dieux ! je sens la chair palpitante repousser le ciseau ....

(Il redescend tremblant et confus.)

.....Vaine terreur, fol aveuglement .... Non ... je n'y toucherai point ; les dieux m'épouvantent. Sans doute, elle est déjà consacrée à leur rang.

(Il la considère de nouveau.)

Que veux-tu changer ! regarde ! quels nouveaux charmes veux-tu lui donner. Ah, c'est sa perfection, qui fait son défaut. Divine Galatée, moins parfaite, il ne te manquerait rien.

(Tendrement)

Mais il te manque une âme ; ta figure ne peut s'en passer.

(Avec plus d'attendrissement encore.)

Qui l'âme faite pour animer un tel corps doit être belle."

At length the statue says, "Moi" and then the orchestral interlude portrays the surprise and consternation of the sculptor. "C'est moi," continues Galatée and then in hesitation she questions her existence, "Ce n'est pas moi." Pygmalion, rushing toward her, covers her with kisses

and she again exclaims, "Ah, encore moi". When the orchestra has expressed the happiness of these two united beings, Pygmalion closes the scene with the words, "Oui, cher et charmant objet ; oui, digne chef-d'oeuvre de mes mains, de mon coeur et des dieux, c'est toi, c'est toi seul ; je t'ai donné tout mon être ; je ne vivrai plus que par toi." When Pygmalion was given at Weimar in 1772 a series of interludes was specially written for it by Aspelmeyer but at the Comédie-Française the andante movement of the ouverture and the first interlude were composed by Rousseau himself and the rest by a merchant of Lyons named Coignet. (1) By this combination of words and music Rousseau believed he had approached that union of words and music which the Greeks called μελοποιία . As the merchant Coignet explained in a letter to the Mercure de France, "M. Rousseau vouloit donner, par ce spectacle, une idée de la Mélopée des Grecs, de leur ancienne déclamation théâtrale : il desiroit que la Musique fût expressive, qu'elle peignît la situation, et, pour ainsi dire, le genre d'affection que ressentoit l'Acteur."

(1) Cf. The very able work, Jean-Jacques Rousseau als Komponist seiner lyrischen Scene „Pygmalion" by Edgar Istel, Leipzig, 1901.

When Rousseau wrote Pygmalion in 176[illegible], he was so enthusiastic about it that he almost sent a copy of it to the Italian poet, Metastasio whom he admired so much, but this enthusiasm soon turned into complete indifference. Paris did not see a performance of this scène lyrique until fifteen years after its completion. In 1770 it attracted some attention because of an amateur performance of it in Lyons. Goethe, who heard the work at Weimar in 1772, believed it was to revolutionize opera. "Und so will ich denn auch noch eines kleinen, aber merkwurdig Epoche machenden Werkes gedenken: es ist Rousseau's Pygmalion. Vieles konnte man darüber sagen." (1) Before the initial performance at the Comédie-Francaise Rousseau acted in a strange manner. At first he complained that it was to be given without his consent but, when he was waited upon by a delegation of actors from the Comédie-Française, he refused to see Larive, who was at the head of the delegation and who was to play the title role, and shouted through the key-hole, "Faites comme vous voudrez, je ne m'en mêle pas : je vous prévions

(1) Dichtung und Wahrheit, III,ii.

seulement qu'il y a dans l'ouvrage une sottise ; je ne la corrigerai pas." (1) In spite of this protest, which was actuated either by his sincere conviction that the scène lyrique was a failure or merely by a momentary whim of his changeable disposition, Pygmalion was favorably received in Paris. "Les Comédiens François ont donné le lundi, 30 octobre, la première représentation de Pygmalion, scène lyrique, écrite avec chaleur, rendue supérieurement par M. Larive, jouant Pygmalion, et Mlle. Raucourt, représentant la statue de Galatée, a beaucoup réussi ..... Une musique analogue aux sentiments de l'artiste remplit les intervalles de sa déclamation et la fortifie. C'est un genre nouveau où l'orchestre représente alternativement avec l'acteur, et dans lequel l'un et l'autre, l'orchestre et l'acteur font tour-à-tour pantomime ; cela peut donner l'idée, à ce qu'on prétend, de la Mélopée des Grecs et de leur déclamation théâtrale. Au moins, c'est un genre qui peut varier les plaisirs du théâtre." (2)

(1) Cf. Geoffroy, Cours de littérature dramatique, second edition, Paris, 1825, vol. III, p. 532.

(2) Mercure du France, Nov., 1775.

A still more favorable account is found in les Mémoires de Bachaumont : "Pygamlion est une seule scène en prose très accentuée : c'est un monologue très chaud où cet artiste fameux développe la vivacité de ses sentiments pour la statue. La scène a fait la plus grande sensation : on peut la regarder comme un petit chef-d 'oeuvre dont il faudrait cependant supprimer quelque idées trop abstraites, quelques expressions sentant trop l'école et le dialectiqtien." (1) Grimm, in spite of his enmity toward Rousseau, praised Pygmalion but La Harpe spoke of it as "un long monologue plein de déclamations et de métaphysique et dont le sujet est un délire continuel qui finit par un miracle." Geoffroy, in 1802, stigmatized the work as "un amas d'apostrophes, d'exclamations, d'interrogations, de répétitions, un véritable arsenal de toutes les figures de rhétorique. (2) Notwithstanding these adverse criticisms Pygmalion remained in the repertory of the Comédie-Française until 1816.

(1) p. 262.

(2) Journal des Débats, 7 vendémiaire, an X.

Rousseau in the passage quoted above from les Observations sur l'Alceste de M. Glück (1) mentioned that Pygmalion had not been imitated by any of his contemporaries and at the date of the letter, 1774, he apparently regretted his failure to revolutionize French opera. After his death, however, Paris saw a second scène lyrique in Benda's Ariadne auf Naxos, which was given at the Italian Opera in 1781. George Benda, ~~who was~~ a German composer of little importance, had gained some celebrity in his own country on account of musical interludes which he was accustomed to write for works similar to Pygmalion. Rousseau was apparently ignorant of Benda's work, although some of the latter's scènes lyriques had become well-known in Germany before Pygmalion was given in Paris. Benda's wife who created the leading roles in all of his works, possessed that rare ability of harmonizing the tones of her speaking voice with the musical interludes. Benda's fame, due in most part to these histrionic talents of his wife, spread to Paris, and after many refusals he finally consented to go there

(1) Cf. p. 46.

and superintend the production in French of his masterpiece, Ariadne auf Naxos. The plot of this work, like that of Pygmalion is drawn from classical mythology, but it is somewhat longer and divided into three scenes. The first scene consists of a monologue by Theseus, who, as he beholds the sleeping Ariadne, regrets that he must leave her a prey to the Greeks, the second scene is Ariadne's monologue of despair over the absence of her lover, and the third act contains the announcement, by the voice of an Oread from behind the scenes, of the desertion of Theseus. The play ends with Ariadne's casting herself into the sea. Although much more dramatic than Pygmalion, Ariadne auf Naxos was not a success, when given in French. The Mercure de France (1) praised the music of Benda but criticized the translation of the German text : "Ce n'est pas ainsi que l'immortel Citoyen de Génève a écrit son Pygmalion. Quel feu ! quelle vigueur ! quelle énergie dans ses manières d'écrire." In 1783 Larive, inspired by his success in the title role

(1) July 20, 1781.

of Pygmalion, tried to revive the scène lyrique with his Pyrame et Thisbé, which, however, was withdrawn from the Comédie Française after a few performances. After Larive's failure there appeared an occasional scène lyrique written by some admirer of Rousseau or some musical amateur eager to reform the French opera, but as a distinct genre it disappeared.

Returning to the statement that Rousseau was the father of the melodrama, in the signification of popular drama, we can easily see how erroneous it is. Besides the ~~part~~ fact that this genre of the scène lyrique was a failure and that only one work, Pygmalion, had any success at all, it must be admitted that there were no popular elements in works such as Pygmalion and Ariadne auf Naxos. The scène lyrique appealed to a very limited number of appreciative musicians but to the general public it seemed a form of drama mid-way between opera and tragedy, with the faults of both and none of their excellent qualities. First of all the ideal actor, 'un acteur sensible et intelligent', (1) of whom Rousseau

(1) Cf. p. 47.

wrote, was extremely difficult to find, because few actors were able to place the tones of their speaking voice in such a manner as to avoid discords with the instrumental music. Furthermore the separation of words and music caused the plot to drag; at each musical interlude the action of the plot was interrupted, because the orchestra did nothing more than express through the medium of music, the words spoken by the actor. Benda, after his return to Germany in 1781 recognized how much this repetition injured the artistic effect, and so began to use the spoken words and the music simultaneously rather than alternately. In this form the scène lyrique became very successful in Germany, where we find many notable examples of it, as, for instance, in certain of the operas of Mozart and Beethoven (1) and in several scenes of Mendelssohn's incidental music for Mid-summer Night's Dream. More recently Strauss has revived the genre in his Enoch Arden. In France a revival of the genre is to be found in the so-called 'adaptations musicales', which are

(1) Cf. The grave-digging scene in Fidelio, the dream-scene in Egmont and the incantation-scene in Der Freischutz.

musical accompaniments to the recitation of poems, especially those of Verlaine and Musset. In England and Germany these scènes lyriques, or 'adaptations musicales' are called melodramas. The history of this word melodrama, will show why Rousseau's name has been associated with the popular drama.

Rousseau had used the term, scène lyrique probably through analogy with tragédie lyrique, which his contemporaries often applied to opera. Dubois (1) the translator of the German text of Ariadne auf Naxos, had suggested in his preface the substitution of mélodrame for scène lyrique ; "Nous n'ignorons pas que le mot Mélodrame peut s'appliquer indifféremment à toutes les productions dramatiques qui ont besoin du secours de la musique : mais comme on n'a pas imaginé d'expression propre au nouveau genre dont il est ici question, nous avons préféré d'employer un terme déjà connu, et qui, d'ailleurs n'est guère en usage pour désigner les autres productions dramatico-musicales. C'est ainsi qu'on est convenu d'appeler Drames les pièces larmoyantes, qui ne peuvent être nommées, ni

(1) The preface of the translation of Ariadne auf Naxos is signed, J.B.D.B. which Barbier in his Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes says are the initials of Dubois.

Comédies, quoique le mot drame soit applicable à toutes les pièces de Théâtre." Dubois' suggestion was apparently accepted because both Grimm and the Mercure de France spoke of Ariadne auf Naxos as a 'mélodrame.' Istel (1) is inclined to think Rousseau may have intended to use mélodrame in the sense of scène lyrique, although he is unable to point out any passage as conclusive proof of this intention. In Rousseau's Dictionnaire de musique, mélodrame is frequently used but always in the meaning of opera, a signification which was borrowed from the Italian melodramma at the time when Rousseau and his adversaries were discussing the merits of French and Italian music. For example, a pamphlet published in 1772 bore the title "Traité du mélodrame, ou réflexions sur la musique dramatique in which mélodrame means dramatic music in general. Istel points to the passage quoted above (2) from les Observations sur l'Alceste de M. Glück as the first use of melodrama for a lyric scene, (3) but he was misled

(1) Op. cit. appendix I, p. 70.

(2) p. 46.

(3) Op. cit. appendix II, p. 72. "Ich glaube nicht fehl zu gehen, wenn ich in dieser aus den Observations citierten Stelle den Anlass zu dem Entstehen der neuen dem Worte, „Melodrama" bis dahin fremder Bedeutung, die in der Folge dann seine ernige wurde, sehe."

into making this hypothesis, because he was unacquainted with the preface of Dubois. (1) Since there is no instance of the use of the word *mélodrame* in any sense other than that of opera before 1781 and since Dubois made a definite statement concerning the new meaning which he wished to give to the word when he translated *Ariadne auf Naxos*, we may feel certain that *mélodrame* acquired the signification of *scène lyrique* in 1781.

A year later a musical amateur named Martineau proposed to differentiate the two terms by restricting the use of *scène lyrique* to monologues and *mélodrame* to dialogues. As Martineau made this proposal in the preface to his *Ariane*, a short *mélodrame* which he printed privately and which was never produced, he attracted no attention to this distinction in the meaning of the two terms. After 1781 *scène lyrique* and *mélodrame* became synonymous ; both *Pygmalion* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* were referred to indifferently as the one or the other. Larive's *Tyrane et Thisbé*

(1) Dubois' translation is to be found at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* (Recueil d'opéras français, fr. 10560) but is not noted in the general catalogue either under the name of Benda or that of Dubois.

likewise is mentioned in the Almanac des Théâtres pour l'année 1787 on page 79 as a scène lyrique and on page 184 as a mélodrame. At the beginning of the Revolution mélodrame was used almost exclusively for works of the same nature as Pygmalion, such as Aumale de Corserville's Pandore (1790) and Poultier's Galatée, ou suite de la scène lyrique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1795). (1) The Journal des Théâtres, in speaking of A Day in Turkey, or the Russian Slave, a successful play given at Convent Garden, London, during the year 1791, says ; " Cette pièce est de Madame Crowley. Ce n'est point une comédie, ce n'est point un opéra ; c'est ce que nous appelons un mélo-drame. (2) In Germany Melodram was used exclusively for lyric scenes after Dubois' translation of Ariadne auf Naxos in 1781. Before this date Benda had used the term Monodram for a lyric scene with one actor and Duodram for one with two actors. The extensive use of Melodram in

(1) Copies of both plays are to be found in the collection of plays of the revolutionary period, which formerly belonged to Pixérécourt and which is now in the Bibliothèque du Sérat.

(2) Dec. 30, 1791.

Germany may have had some influence in spreading the use of mélodrame in France, because the genre attained such great success across the Rhine.

During the Revolution mélodrame was used for any scene in which music accompanied monologue. For example we have the following scene from L'Enfant du malheur, ou les amans muets, given at the Ambigu-Comique, year V ;

Scene XI.

(Mélodrame.)

Frédégonde, seule.

Qu'ai-je entendu ?..... Le perfide .....Il me trahit.....il m'abandonne.....L'amour, la haine.....luttent au fond de mon coeur.....que dis-je, l'amour ?.....Ah, désormais, la rage seule peut régner dans mon âme ....Eh quoi! souffrirai-je que mon amant coule des jours heureux auprès d'une rivale adorée..... tandis que moi ..... seule abandonné;....je languirois honteusement dans les bras d'une éternelle vieillesse .... Mon art sera donc puissant.... l'enfer n'aurait donc plus de tortures.... et le Ciel aurait éteint sa foudre...." The spacing in the above scene indicates that music was used exactly as in Pygmalion.

In Elvira another pantomime played at the Ambigu-Comique in the year VIII, numerous stage-directions such as "une musique douce et plaintive se fait entendre", "la musique exprime la douleur", and "une musique mélodieuse se fait entendre," and several morologues which were treated in the same manner as the one quoted above from l'Enfant du malheur, show how close the resemblance was between a pantomime with dialogue and a lyric scene. In short, in plays of an historical or allegorical character, as for example, l'Anniversaire, ou la fête de la souveraineté (1798) there were usually several scenes specially marked mélodrame. The music must have been important in the opinion of the authors because the stage directors often called for elaborate descriptive music. For instance in the l'Anniversaire, the author asked for extraordinary music, "la musique indique le lever du soleil."

From 1791 to 1800 there was no generally adopted term for these pantomimes with dialogue and scenes of mélodrame. Cuvelier and Mittier called their Anniversaire mentioned above, a 'scène lyrique et mélodramatique', Nougaret entitled his Fête de travail (year III) a scène lyrique and Planterre, his Fête de l'égalité (year II) a mélodrame pantomi-lyrique. In 1798 Coffin-Reany called

his Affrico et Nerzola a mélodrame dialogué, an interesting expression because it shows the transition from pantomime dialoguée to mélodrame. As soon as the word mélodrame became familiar to the Boulevard, authors and managers began to use it regardless of whether or not the play contained any lyric scenes similar to the one quoted above from l'Enfant du Malheur. For the small theaters mélodrame possessed two advantages, first, it offered a substitute for the awkward and self-contradictory pantomime dialoguée and secondly it carried with it a learned connotation not unpleasing to the managers who were trying to raise the standards of popular drama. The new word as applied to pantomime with dialogue was frequently ridiculed as in the following passage, " surtout du mélodrame, ce mot n'est ni grec ni francais ; son inventeur ne l'entend pas plus que nous. Nous savons que cela signifie une monstruosité dramatique, remplie d'un style souvent gigantesque, ampoulé." (1) The use of the word persisted in spite of ridicule and adverse criticism and after 1801 mélodrame was universally applied to popular drama or tragedy.

(1) Journal des Spectacles, 11 frimaire, an X.

In recapitulation, the following stages of development in pantomime during the last quarter of the eighteenth century may be noted. Arnould began the evolution of pantomime by the introduction of a serious plot of an historical or romanesque character. After 1791 dialogue was added to pantomime and plots were generally borrowed from the Gothic romances of England. As regards the word mélodrame there are the following changes in ~~the~~ meaning The word, when first introduced into France from Italy, was used as a synonym for opera in general ; in 1771, at Dubois' suggestion, it acquired the meaning of 'scène lyrique' ; then during the Revolution it began to be applied to pantomime with dialogue.

CHAPTER II

The Melodrama

When France returned to comparative quiet and order , the melodrama quickly followed the example of the country and cast aside the excesses and exaggerations of the popular drama during the Revolution. The audiences of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté no longer demanded upon the stage those weird and harrowing scenes which only a few years before had filled them with terror. This change of taste on the part of the public caused the managers and the authors of the Boulevard to abandon the highly romanesque type of play based upon contemporary English novels. At the very theaters where the dramatizations of the Monk and the Mysteries of Udolpho had achieved success, these Gothic fictions were exposed to ridicule

in satirical comic operas and vaudevilles. Not that Lewis and Ann Radcliffe had entirely fallen into disfavor, for there were numerous French translations of both these authors during the post-revolutionary period but rather there was a recognition by the public of the fact that highly colored tales of medieval knights were unsuited to the stage. The melodramatists endeavored to bring the popular drama nearer reality by the use of plots drawn from the national history, popular tradition, or anecdotes of contemporary life. This complete change in subject-matter was unaccompanied by any marked change in form. The melodrama still retained all the freedom of its predecessor, pantomime dialoguée, and relied upon the accessories, such as the music, the pantomime, and the ballet more than the dialogue and the structure of the plot.

The melodrama, although it possessed that freedom of form, which is characteristic of all types of popular literature, showed a tendency toward regularity. Remembering the conservatism of French drama since the Cid, it could hardly be expected that ever the melodramatists should ignore the question of the unities and other essentials of classical tragedy. The hack-writers of the Boulevard, after having passed through a period of revolt in regard to dramatic discipline, began to alter the form and general character of their plays, in order to lessen, if possible, the distance between the popular

theaters and the Comédie-Française. Pixérécourt, who, as we shall see later, became the champion and the theoriser of the melodrama, frequently mentioned the unities and affirmed that he always endeavored to retain them, when it was possible. Geoffroy scoffed at the idea of regularity in the plays of the Boulevard and enumerated their essential features as 'l'abus de la pantomime et des machines, les combats, les danses, le mélange du tragique et du bas comique, les déclamations et l'enflure.' (1) Since the melodramatists were writing for financial remuneration rather than literary fame and posterity, they wasted little time over prefaces and expositions of their dramatic principles. No melodramatist of the Empire or the Restoration has left us an ars melodramatica and it was to this lack of an Aristotle or a Longinus that Gautier humorously ascribed his hesitancy to entering the ranks of popular dramatists. (2) Although the melodramatists themselves made no definite statements

(1) Journal de l'Empire, March 24, 1809.

(2) Gautier, Th., Histoire de l'art dramatique en France vol. IV, p. 356.

as to the dramatic laws governing their productions, it will be possible, after an examination of the plays of Pixérécourt, Caigniez, and a few other popular playwrights, to formulate certain rules which the dramatists of the Boulevard unconsciously followed. The demands of a popular audience in France are in many respects identical with those of a similar audience in England or Italy, so that the melodrama of France at the beginning of the nineteenth century resembles in certain particulars the popular drama of any European country, ~~and~~ especially that of England. The happy ending seems almost a sine qua non of any entertainment destined for the people. Other characteristics of the melodrama of France were due to local conditions and so are peculiar to it alone.

The subject of the present chapter is a discussion of the more important characteristics of the melodrama. The word itself will be defined as it was understood at the beginning of the last century and an attempt will be made to classify the more usual varieties of popular drama during this period.

I. Definition of the word 'melodrama'.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the melodramatists and the dramatic critics were misled by the etymology of the word, mélodrame into insisting upon the music as an integral part of this sort of production. One of the earliest definitions we have is by the dramatic critic of the Journal des Débats, Geoffroy, who, in 1803, characterized the new genre as 'une tragédie dont les personnages entrent et sortent en musique' (1) The German dramatist Kotzebue, after a visit to the Ambigu-Comique in 1804, wrote ; "Ce théâtre est particulièrement consacré aux mélodrames : on appelle ainsi des drames mêlés de musique. Ce genre nouveau est très goûté à Paris" (2) Hoffman, Geoffroy's successor on the Journal des Débats, emphacized the role of the music. "Prenez tous les drames de la Comédie-Française, traduisez-les en langage des halles, placez une ritournelle à chaque entrée, et à chaque sortie, vous aurez d'assez bons mélodrames." (3) Pixérécourt, in a pamphlet defending the

(1) Journal des Débats, Jan. 7, 1803.

(2) Souvenirs de Paris en 1804, p. 261. The translation of the German text was made by Pixérécourt in 1805.

(3) Journal des Débats, Mar. 19, 1817.

melodrama published in 1818, defined the genre as drame mêlé de musique, or a drame lyrique, dont la musique est exécuté par l'orchestre au lieu d'être chantée. (1) In 1832 he endeavored to prove the correctness of his definition by an account of the origin of melodrama. "C'était à proprement parler, du drame lyrique taillé sur le patron des pièces de Sedaine, et ce qui le prouve, c'est que les meilleurs mélodrames ont été traduits en italien, en allemand, et mis en musique par les plus célèbres compositeurs étrangers. Sans aller plus loin, Victor, ou l'enfant de la forêt, le premier-né des mélodrames modernes, était un opéra reçu au Théâtre-Favart et dont Soulié avait composé la musique :..... On voulut me faire un passe-droit dont ma jeune fierté se révolta. Je portai mon opéra à l'Ambigu-Comique où il fut joué en supprimant seulement les morceaux de chant. Telle est l'origine du mélodrame." (2)

(1) Guerre au mélodrame, p. 14.

(2) Paris, ou le livre des cent-et- un, Paris, 1832 : Pixérécourt's article on the melodrama.

This account of the origin of the melodrama ,even if it were true, would not necessarily prove that Pixerécourt's definition was either correct or exact. This error of the early melodramatists and critics of insisting upon music as an essential part of popular drama has been followed by more recent lexicographers .The Academy defines the meaning of the word as ' sorte de drame populaire mêlé de musique.' Littré 's definition is more exact ; ' sorte de tragédie populaire d'où la musique a presque entièrement disparu.' The music, which in all of these definitions is considered as an essential characteristic , is , as we shall see later, generally present in the melodrama but never has been an integral part of it. Any drama of Pixérécourt or Caigniez would, with the omission of the music, remain a melodrama regardless of all the definitions quoted above.

The distinguishing characteristics of the genre were first enumerated by Geoffroy, who in an article on la Fille adoptive, ou les deux mères made the distinction between popular tragedy and middle-class

comedy. "Est ce un drame, est ce un mélodrame ? C'est une grande question. Ce qui n'est pas douteux, c'est que le drame ou mélodrame est un roman de Madame de Genlis intitulé les Mères rivales..... En sa qualité de roman dialogué, la pièce peut être regardée comme un drame, Quelques coups d' archet qui accompagnent l'entrée ou la sortie des principaux personnages, suffisent-ils pour elever ce drame au rang du mélodrame ? Je ne crois pas ; ce qui pourrait m'engager à reconnaitre la pièce pour un mélodrame, c'est d'abord son irrégularité, les changemens de la scène presqu'à chaque acte et le mélange continuel de comique et du pathétique." (1) In addition to this he considered essential that atmosphere of awe and terror which prevailed in the early melodrama. "Cette terreur me parait être absolument de l'essence du mélodrame ; ainsi prenant en considération toutes ces causes réunies, nous appellerons mélodrame, le roman dialogué des Deux Mères." (2) For reasons very similar

(1) Journal des Débats, May 7, 1810.

(2) " " " " "

to those of Geoffroy just mentioned, Charles Nodier classified Duval's Edouard en Ecosse as a melodrama. "Il se rapproche d'un genre irrégulier, d'un genre proscrit par le mouvement désordonné de l'action dramatique, par la complication incroyable des incidens, par la multiplicité des grandes péripéties, par la combinaison recherchée des effets de scène. Edouard en Ecosse, je dois dire, est un véritable mélodrame, mais c'est le chef-d'oeuvre du genre. (1) Another early definition, although written by conservative and orthodox classicists who refused to take the melodrama seriously and to consider it anything beyond a coarse amusement for the uneducated, contains an adequate description. "Mélodrame. Ce mot ne désigne pas même le caractère de ce genre de spectacle, qui tient du Tragique puisqu'on fait paraître des Rois et des Princes ; du comique, puisqu'on y présente les vices ordinaires de la société et les petites passions de la classe du peuple ; du Lyrique, puisque tous les personnages n'y parlent et n'y agissent qu'au son des instruments de musique. Il aurait donc fallu employer quatre mots pour définir cette espèce de monstre, sorti

(1) Journal de l'Empire, June 2, 1814.

du cerveau de M. Cuvelier, comme Minerve sortit toute armée de celui de Jupiter. Quoi qu'il en soit, gardons-nous bien de le regarder le mélodrame, comme chef-d'œuvre de l'esprit humain, c'est dans force du terme, une superfétation dramatique, d'autant plus facile à enfanter qu'on peut emprunter toutes les parties qui le constituent ..... On peut introduire dans le mélodrame des personnages de toutes les classes ; on peut leur faire le langage le plus noble comme le plus trivial ; de là naît la facilité des contrastes. Un Roi n'est point déplacé à côté d'un Palefrenier quand il rend complice de quelques desseins hardis et criminels. L'auteur peut transporter ses personages à cent lieues de l'endroit où ils se trouvent au commencement de l'action ; il peut à son gré composer le noeud de l'intrigue soit du caractère, soit des passions de ces personnages, soit du lieu qu'ils habitent ; il peut, pour rompre ce noeud, employer les Hommes, la Magie, ou les Dieux ; tout est donc à sa disposition. Tant de moyens sans doute, prouvent à la fois et la fécondité de son inventeur et le bon goût du public qui l'accueille, puis qu'il est vrai de dire que souvent les Théâtres du Boulevard regorgent de spectateurs, tandis que les Francais prechent dans le desert."

(1) The fundamental point in all of these definitions is the question of freedom. The melodramatist, after having chosen a situation for the beginning of his drama, was in no wise bound to develop it and could by the introduction of extraneous characters and events create new situations or modify the original one according to his fancy. In classical tragedy, on the contrary, the dramatist is held down by a dramatic necessity and is unable to allow his individual caprice to prevent the catastrophe or alter its nature. In the melodrama, as Brunetière once wrote, (2) 'les événements ne s'engendrent point les uns des autres.' Aside from this freedom, or the absence of what may be called 'the dramatic necessity', there is no characteristic of the melodrama which may be considered essential. The conformity of the early melodramatists regarding the use of music, the number of acts, the nature of the plot was not brought about by exigencies of the genre but rather by the tacit following of conventions which had grown up in popular

(1) Annales dramatiques, ou dictionnaire général des théâtres par une société de gens de lettres, Paris, 1809, 9 vol., article on melodrama.

(2) F. Brunetière, Variétés. p. 215, Mélodrame ou tragédie.

theaters of Paris. The audiences demanded a liberal mixture of the comic and the tragic, they were fond of music and liked the introduction of songs and ballets, they applauded commonplace aphorisms and wept over false or exaggerated sentiment and pathos. These preferences of the pit modified the exterior of the drama but did not change its character. Omitting, for the present, minor details, the melodrama may be defined as a form of popular tragedy in which the form is free and variable and in which the author develops his plot according to his individual fancy.

No sooner had the word 'melodrama' become definitely associated with popular tragedy than it acquired a pejorative meaning. Unfortunately the earlier dramatists of the small theaters had abused their freedom and their plays had shown the effects of an unbridled imagination. The conservative critics, who were eager to crush this popular drama, never failed to exaggerate the faults of the melodramatists. The financial success of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique embittered those who were opposed to popular tragedy and misled them into a general condemnation. "Un bon mélodrame est toujours un mauvais ouvrage" wrote a staid compiler of a theatrical almanac for the year

1807. (1) Geoffroy, the first friend of the melodramatists, attempted to ward off adverse criticism of himself for discussing melodrama. "Ceux qui pourroient se scandaliser de me voir revenir sur un mélodrame, doivent savoir que je n'estime point ce genre, lequel doit entraîner la ruine de la tragédie, mais dans la décadence actuelle, il faut l'accorder au peuple français, comme le législateur des juifs leur avoit accordé le divorce ad duritiam cordis. Puisqu'il faut souffrir le mélodrame, les littérateurs doivent tâcher de le diriger, de le régulariser pour le rendre moins nuisible. Enfin le scandale cessera si l'on veut réfléchir que le mélodrame dont j'ai parlé deux fois, tient aux objets les plus intéressans pour la nation et pour l'humanité. J'ose me flatter qu'on me pardonnera les deux articles, quand on les aura lus. (2)

(1) Fabien Pillet, Opinion du parterre, 1807.

(2) Journal des Débats, Aug. 10, 1804. Cf. A similar statement by Geoffroy, "Ce n'est pas en critique que je m'occupe des mélodrames, c'est en observateur et en philosophe: ils attirent la foule, ils produisent de l'effet ; comment pourroient-ils m'être indifférens ?" Journal des Débats, July 2, 1805.

Colnet offered the same excuse for introducing the melodrama into his articles in the Gazette de France . "Pour moi, quelques graves lecteurs me reprochent peut-être d'attacher tant d'importance au sort d'un mélodrame ; mais j'en appelle au goût du siècle. Il faut respecter l'opinion publique." (1) This stigma which had become attached to melodrama and which caused Geoffroy and Colnet to assume an apologetic attitude, aroused the indignation of Pixérécourt who objected to the unfortunate signification which the word 'mélodrame' was acquiring. "Je sais que depuis quelque temps ce mot est à lui seul un synonyme universel ; il signifie tout ce qu'il y a de mauvais, de dangereux, de criminel même. C'est comme disait un certain Voltaire, l'abomination de la désolation. Ce mot enfin est devenu l'arme ridicule et banale avec laquelle on attaque, on veut détruire au théâtre tout ce qui offre de l'intérêt, une couleur un peu forte, des situations dramatiques, le domaine des passions enfin. (2) Fourteen years after he wrote the above protest,

(1) Gazette de France, October, 1810.

(2) Guerre au mélodrame, Paris, 1818, p. 2.

he again complained of the critics' use of the word. "Pendant vingt ans [illegible] j'ai entendu dire de vieux habitués d'théâtre : Un mélodrame ! fi donc ! je n'en ai jamais vu, Dieu m'en garde." (1) Pixérécourt's objections remained unnoticed, or at least unheeded, for the word still retains to-day its pejorative meaning. Present dramatic criticism considers that it has done its worst when it has classed a tragedy as a melodrama. Even Brunetière, who was certainly no friend of melodrama either in poetry or prose, objected to the indiscriminate use of the word by dramatic critics. (2) The Dictionnaire de l'Académie, however, recognizes this derogatory meaning of the word : "Il (mélodrame) se dit par extension de tout ouvrage dans lequel sont accumulés les situations violentes et les péripéties imprévues, ou dont le langage est emphatique et exagéré." The early melodramatists, many of whom sacrificed everything to popularity, are responsible for the present connotation

(1) Paris ou le livre des cent-et-un, article on the melodrama.

(2) Variétés, p. 715 ; Mélodrame ou tragédie ?

of the word. It is to be regretted perhaps that mélodrame, which might have been used for a freer type of tragedy, such as the dramas of Hugo and Dumas, père, should have become a term of reproach.

Before entering upon the discussion of the structure and characteristics of melodrama, it will be well perhaps to describe briefly a few examples of early melodrama, which will illustrate the definition given above. Coelina, ou l'enfant du mystère one of the early successes of Guilbert de Pixéréccurt, offers a good example of the popular tragedy in its free form and undeveloped plot. Coelina contains every variety of drama from high tragedy to low comedy and from opera to vaudeville. Although the action stops after three acts, it might have continued indefinitely, as Herman's daring exploits and breathless escapes might have been concluded by a blast of the horn in the twenty-fifth as well as the fifth act. Coelina, like many of the early melodramas was a dramatization of a popular novel. Pixéréccurt found in Ducray-Duminil's lengthy fiction entitled Coelina a plot filled with movement and surprise. The interest centers around the identity of a young girl from whose name the title of the play is taken. Coelina does not

claim to be une force qui va but she belongs to the same catagory as Hernani, for both she and the typical hero of romantic drama first attract our interest because of the mystery which surrounds them. Pixérécourt's melodrama begins with the introduction of a character even more mysterious than the heroine. Dufour is sending away a poor mute named Francisque. The latter's story is related in the exposition of the plot. Eight years before the beginning of the play he had been attacked by two men whose identity still remains unknown and, after being beaten unconscious, had had his tongue cut out. To the audience of the Ambigu-Comique or the Gaîté, well trained as they were in the conventions of the melodrama, this removal of Francisque's tongue at once conveyed the information that the poor man was in possession of some secret which his enemies feared he might reveal. For eight years Francisque had lived in poverty, now begging by roadside, now accepting the hospitality of the kind-hearted Dufour, who is at present reluctantly sending him away because of the expected arrival of a guest named Truguelin. As Francisque leaves the house, Truguelin appears. By accident the two meet, there is a moment of suspense characteristically melodramatic, and as Francisque withdraws, Truguelin trembles with fear.

This unexplained incident must have been of itself sufficient to arouse the curiosity of an audience on the Boulevard. Truguelin, as soon as he is alone with his servant, plans to force Francisque to leave the vicinity at once or, in case of his refusal, to kill him. Coelina, the rich ward of Dufour overhears the plot and warns Francisque. She hates Truguelin because he is endeavoring to separate her from her lover, Stephany, the son of Dufour, and force her to marry his son. When Francisque refuses to comply with Truguelin's request to leave, he is attacked by Truguelin and his servant but succeeds in protecting himself until Coelina has brought the whole household to the scene. Truguelin accuses Francisque of having insulted him but Coelina contradicts this statement and by her insinuations arouses the suspicions of Dufour as to the honesty of his guest. Truguelin, angered at this attitude on the part of his host, prepares to leave and swears vengeance upon Dufour and Francisque. Dufour then decides to give his consent to the marriage of his son Stephany and Coelina. The second act opens with songs and dances in honor of the engagement of the young couple. When this scene of gaiety is at its height Truguelin's servant brings a message to Dufour from his master. Dufour, from information contained in the message,

announces that Coelina is not his niece, as he has always supposed, but the daughter of Francisque. To dispel any doubts regarding the veracity of his statement, Truguélin sends the birth-certificate of Coelina. Dufour is filled with indignation and drives Francisque and his daughter from the house. The act closes with the arrival of the village doctor who informs Dufour and the people assembled at his home that Truguelin has been identified as one of the men who attacked Francisque eight years ago and that the police are already upon his track. The scene of the third act is 'un lieu sauvage', 'dans le fond est un pont de bois, au dessous duquel se précipite un torrent, qui vient passer derrière un moulin.' Truguelin appears upon the bridge and delivers a monologue on the subject of the unhappy state of mind of murderers and assassins. "Point de repos pour l'assassin ! vengeance ! vengeance ! " and the echo in the mountains answers "vengeance !" Michaud, the miller offers him shelter for the night. Francisque and Coelina also come to the miller and while there meet Truguelin, whose identity is discovered. Upon the arrival of the soldiers who have been summoned by the miller, there is a scene in pantomime, which might well have been taken from some pantomime given on the Boulevard before the Revolution

and which is certainly a relic of the cave from which melodrama sprang. Truguelin makes frantic efforts to escape the soldiers, he engages in hand-to-hand conflict with several, throws one into the river from the bridge at the rear of the stage, and is just about to disappear when the peasants arrive to assist the soldiers. Franciscque then explains by means of pantomime, and also by the production of a written statement that Coelina is the off-spring of a secret marriage between himself and the 'belle Isoline', the sister of Dufour. Dufour accepts this explanation —— for what reason both the dramatist and the audience might find it difficult to state —— and consents to the union of his son and Coelina. The play ends with rejoicing and the singing of a 'ronde' expressing the sentiment of complete trust in Providence.

Vous le voyez, mes chers amis,
De l'ombre en vain l'on couvre
Les crimes que l'on a commis ;
Tôt ou tard ça s'découvre, etc.

The plot of this melodrama is puerile and inane. The succession of events without any logical relation to

one another, the abuse of various tricks of the drama, such as disguise, the mixture of song, ballets, and pantomime, all contribute to make a hybrid drama worthy of some of the abusive criticism which is received when it first appeared at the Ambigu-Comique in 1800. Yet Coelina was popular, it was played no less than 1476 times in Paris and the provinces and was translated into several foreign languages. A few critics ever praised it. The cause of this popularity is not difficult to find. Coelina is full of action. The spectator, like the reader of some old and rambling romance, might not always understand the why's and the wherefore's of this continual movement but a lack of comprehension did not detract from the interest. The variety of the performance, the sudden changesfrom tears to laughter and the lack of restraint and convention in both the drama and the acting pleased an audience made up of the middle and lower classes of society.

Another typical example of early melodrama is Caigniez's Jugement de Salomon, which is less extravagant and romantic in both plot and treatment. It is not a dramatization of a novel, like Coelina, nor is it filled with so many improbable and almost impossible situations.

Starting with the Biblical anecdote of Solomon's judgment Caigniez invented a perfectly sane plot. The scene of the first act is laid in the gardens of Herod's palace. Leïla is hiding in the gardens in order to see Eliphal, a younger brother of Solomon. While living with her nurse in a small house near the city of Hebron, she had met the king's brother and had borne him a son, who on the night of his birth had been stolen and replaced by a dead infant. Leïla had then lost sight of Eliphal for three years but when she hears that he is to be married to Tamira she comes to the palace in hopes of seeing him once again. While waiting in the gardens, she meets a child toward whom she feels a strange attraction but the arrival of Tamira, the supposed mother of the little boy, causes him to be taken away from Leïla. In the meanwhile Eliphal arrives with an Egyptian princess whom he has just brought from her country and who is to marry Solomon. Then follow dances and merrymaking in honor of Solomon's approaching marriage. Eliphal as he recognizes Leïla among the spectators is touched with pity and love and the expression of sorrow on his face becomes offensive both to Tamira and the king. The crowd, however, does not notice the sadness of the king's brother and the act ends with the ballets and songs. The second act takes place in a room of the palace. Leïla after the meeting

of the little boy in the garden and witnessing the harshness of Tamira toward Lim, has become convinced that it is her own child. After having gained access into the palace, Leïla succeeds in finding the child again and after having discovered certain marks on his neck and arm, declares that she is the mother of the child. Tamira arrives upon the scene, and orders the soldiers to take the child away from Leïla. Solomon hears of the quarrel concerning the child and orders the two women to appear in the judgment hall. The third act is a dramatization of the episode from the Bible. After both Tamira and Leïla have maintained that they were each the true mother, Tamira admits to Solomon that she would rather see the child dead than in the hands of another woman. A soldier is just about to divide the child when Leïla declares that the child must live even if Tamira ~~must~~ have it. Solomon then pronounces Leila to be the real mother, banishes Tamira and consents to the marriage of Eliphal and Leïla.

From the point of view of dramatic construction and invention, le Jugement de Salomon is far superior to Coelina. Caignez's plot is well handled and hangs together quite as well as the plots of some of the seventeenth century classics. The characters of the two

mothers are excellently drawn. The style and dialogue is weak but this did not prevent the success of the play, for the Boulevard was, and still is, always ready to sacrifice literary excellence to brilliant costumes and scenery. Geoffroy wrote a very favorable criticism which ended with these words of praise for Caigniez. "Le principal mérite de l'auteur est dans la fable qui me paraît heureusement imaginée et ce mérite précisément celui qui manque à tous nos faiseurs dramatiques. Son talent pourrait s'élever au-dessus de la sphère des spectacles forains et l'on pourrait appliquer à son ouvrage les deux vers d'Ovide au sujet d'Arachne, que Lesage avait appliqués au théâtre de la Foire :"Son origine est basse, sa famille est obscure, mais son art a de la noblesse et de l'éclat." (1)

As an example of the historical melodrama, which soon became one of the most flourishing types of the genre, we may take Pixérécourt's Tékéli, ou le siège de Montgatz, which was first played in 1803. The

(1) Journal des Débats, 9 ventose, an X.

plot deals with the heroic defense of the Castle of Montgatz by Alexina, the wife of Tékéli, a count of Hungary. The beginning of the action is in what we now call a truly melodramatic style. " Le théâtre représente une épaisse forêt.....Il fait nuit. Au lever du rideau et pendant l'ouverture, on entend un violent orage. Les éclairs, le tonnerre, la pluie, la grêle, le vent se succèdent avec furie." Tékéli with his faithful servant Wolf is making his way through the forest in order to reach his Castle of Montgatz, which in his absence is being defended by his wife. In this forest Tékéli meets an Austrian officer, overcomes him in a hand-to-hand encounter and then forces him to divulge the plans of the Austrian army for gaining possession of Montgatz. Upon learning that the final struggle is to take place the next day, Tékéli resolves to reach the castle at any cost. A wedding procession arrives upon the scene and Tékéli, pretending to be in a weak and exhausted condition, prevails upon the merry and kind-hearted people to carry him to the moulin de Neben. The scene of the second act is laid within the mill. Austrian soldiers arrive and begin a thorough search of the premises and in the meanwhile Tékéli escapes in a bag of meal. The third act takes place in the large Gothic hall of the

Castle of Montgatz. Alexina is hard pressed by her soldiers and peasants who threaten to rise in rebellion. A message from the Austrian emperor announces an immediate attack unless the castle surrenders. While Alexina is refusing to give up the fight and urging her men to continue to defend the castle until the return of her husband, a flourish of trumpets and a roll of drums is heard and Tékéli appears on the scene. He is closely followed by a detachment of Austrian soldiers. After a stage-fight, Tékéli and his soldiers are victorious over the Austrians who are at first made prisoners and soon after set free by the generous count. A pantomime and ballet, in honor of Tékéli's return and his victory over the Austrians ends the play.

The historical melodrama, of which Tékéli is one of the earliest examples has now become so common that we find it somewhat difficult to judge fairly this play of Pixérécourt. Forgetting momentarily the successes of Dumas, père, and Sardou we may be able to recognize some of Pixérécourt's merits. The action of Tékéli is simple and progresses naturally without

too much recourse to the hackneyed tricks of popular tragedy. A Penelope heroine, whether engaged in weaving tapestry or in defending castles is an interesting figure and Pixérécourt in his humble way has made the most of the character of Alexina. The scene in the third act where Alexina, in spite of the rebellious cries of her soldiers, continues to believe in the immediate return of her husband, is handled with no little dramatic skill. Tékéli's escape from the mill in a meal-bag is managed quite as well as the famous Falstaff episode. The quasi-historical atmosphere of the play lends an air of reality which is absent from Coelina.

These three melodramas which I have just described illustrate the definition of the genre as given above. (1) The mere recital of the plot hardly gives an adequate idea of the general effect of these plays when acted and in no wise shows the remarkable amount of dramatique technique and stage-craft of Pixérécourt and Caigniez. These brief descriptions of Coelina,

(1) p. 77.

le Jugement de Salomon, and Tékéli do, however, offer illustrations of the fundamental characteristics of melodrama, such as the freedom of form, the mixture of tragedy and comedy, and the absence of development in the plot. We may now enter into a more detailed description of the structure and form of the genre and of some of the minor characteristics.

Since, from the time of the Cid and les Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid to the present day, every discussion of the drama has begun with the subject of the unities, it will not be amiss to touch upon this question even when it concerns a form of popular drama, just without the pale of literature. Freedom seemed the one characteristic of popular drama which both the melodramatists and their enemies admitted to be essential and so it appears all the more surprising that the dramatists of the Boulevard should have had the slightest concern for the laws which are supposed to come from the Stagerian philosopher. As a matter of fact the majority of the dramas at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté were lacking in all the unities, because their authors were entirely ignorant concerning what Pixérécourt termed "les sévères règles de notre scène," but there were a few melodramatists, such as Pixérécourt and Caigniez, who did strive to retain the unities and

expressed regret whenever the nature of the plot prevented them from observing these sévères règles.

Those melodramatists who were aware of the lively discussion regarding the unities which took place from 1800 to 1870 must have been influenced by it. They surely had heard of Madame de Staël's unités de salon et de cadran. In 1809 all Paris knew about the battle which raged around Népomucène Lemercier's Christophe Colomb. At the first performance one spectator was killed and several wounded, and before the play had been given eleven times, the police had to be called in to keep order and prevent further catastrophes. (1) Unfortunately for Lemercier, the reactionary party was not sufficiently strong in 1809 to insure the success of Christophe Colomb even if the tactics of Hugo at the famous première had been adopted. The conservative party, even at this time, was beginning to admit that there was no harm in allowing the popular theaters all the liberty they desired, provided the Théâtre Français and the Odéon remained faithful to classical traditions. Merlin, the president of the

(1) Cf. Le Roy, A., L'Aube du théâtre romantique, Paris, 1904, p. 169.

Academy in 1810, when Lemercier was admitted, took occasion in his discours de réception to rebuke the author of Pinto and Christophe Colomb for his revolutionary tendencies and at the same time to allow all possible latitude to the faiseurs du mélodrame. "Que la classe laborieuse du peuple tolère ces licences dans ces écrivains qui ont consacré leurs plumes éphémères aux théâtres créés pour cela, et qu'elle seule doit fréquenter, à la bonne heure." This liberty which Merlin allowed the melodramatists could not fail to influence in the end the Théâtre Français. The brilliancy and the effectiveness in the performance of a mediocre popular tragedy, with its frequent changes of costume and scenery, was in strong contrast with the monotony of the staging in classical tragedy. Hugo undoubtedly learned more from the Ambigu-Comique than from Shakespeare.

Pixérécourt objected to these accusations made against the melodramatists because of their disregard of the unities. "Généralement les pièces remarquables en ce genre (mélodrame) sont soumises, ou à peu près, aux trois unités. Celles de temps et de lieu surtout y sont observées plus scrupuleusement que dans le Déserteur, Richard, Sargène, etc." (1) As regards the unity of action both Pixérécourt and Guilbert

(1) Paris, ou livre des cent-et-un, Pixérécourt's article on the melodrama.

as well as other melodramatists preserved its rigidity and so made some compensation for not retaining the unity of time and place. The unity of place was impossible in the melodrama because, since the elaborate scenery of Audinot and Arnould, the Boulevard demanded a complete change of scenery for each act. Extravagant staging went to such a point that some of the smaller theaters were almost bankrupt, while on the other hand the efforts of the stage manager in the way of the mise en scène often saved from utter failure some ambitious melodrama at the Ambigu-Comique or the Gaîté. The unity of time was at first carefully observed by Pixérécourt. For example in the preface to his Christophe Colomb(1815) he made the following explanation :"Pour me conformer, autant que possible, à la règle des unités, je suis parvenu, non sans beaucoup de peine, à conserver dans mon drame celles de temps et d'action ; ma pièce ne dure que vingt-quatre heures." (1) Three years later he found it necessary to disregard even the unity of time. He naïvely questioned the possibility of the unity of time in the draratization of Mme. Cottin's Elizabeth a novel dealing with an eight-month's journey made by a young girl to gain her father's

(1) Théâtre de Pixérécourt, Nancy, 1841-43, vol. III, p. 312.

release from prison. "Cet intérêt qui s'attache principalement à un voyage que l'héroine a mis huit mois à effectuer, peut-il résulter de la représentation d'un drame assujetti à la règle des vingt-quatre heures ? j'en doute." (1) He asked the indulgence of the public, the majority of whom were perfectly indifferent to the question of the unities, because one unity was still kept. "Si j'ai osé cette fois m'affranchir des règles qui prescrivent l'unité de temps et lieu j'espère que le public voudra bien me savoir quelque gré des efforts que j'ai faits pour conserver au moins l'unité d'action la plus nécessaire à tout ouvrage dramatique." In order not to deceive the public and also to ease his own conscience, he explained by means of the sub-title of the play that in la Fille de l'exilé, ou huit mois en deux heures the action extended beyond the traditional number of hours. He admitted that the example might be dangerous, if it established a precedent, but he could not allow his moral nature to be ruled by his artistic inclinations.

(1) op. cit., vol. IV, p. 4.

Mme. Cottin's Elizabeth possessed too fine a moral lesson to allow artistic considerations to prevent him from turning it into a melodrama. Even after la Fille de l'exilé Pixerécourt had misgivings regarding the unity of time and in the title of his last great melodrama, Latude, ou trente cinq ans de captivité, there is a reminescence of "huit mois en deux heures'.

This respect for the unities which we find in some of the early dramatists of the Boulevard alarmed the critics. Geoffroy was frightened for the very existence of classical tragedy. "Je suis presque affligé de trouver dans ce mélodrame une exposition claire, des situations traitées avec plus d'art qu'il n'appartient au mélodrame, un intérêt qui n'est pas seulement la curiosité, et qui n'est pas produit par des fictions trop invraisemblables ; l'unité d'action et de temps, et même celle du lieu, sont passablement observées; car, à l'exception du premier acte, tout se passe dans le palais du vice-roi, à travers une foule d'incidens ; la marche est nette et facile à suivre. Cette régularité me scandalise, et si les faiseurs de mélodrames ont l'impertinence de savoir dialoguer une scène, et de conduire une action ; s'ils se donnent les airs de tracer les caractères, et d'inventer des situations neuves, je serais bien tenté de dire avec le procureur des Deux

Frères ; ça va mal, ça va mal, pour la tragédie." (1)
In 1817 the same subject was touched upon in the Journal des Débats where an anonymous critic of a recent melodrama, entitled Daniel, asked the pertinent question why the melodramatists troubled themselves at all about the regularity and the unities. "Je ne sais pas pourquoi les auteurs de mélodrames s'obstinent à conserver dans leur ouvrages une sorte de régularité ; ils s'astreignent aux unités de lieu et de temps, comme les auteurs de tragédies ; ils feroient, je pense, fort bien de se mettre au-dessus des règles du théâtre : quand on viole ouvertement celles du bon sens, on a grand tort de tant se gêner pour les autres. Du moins, nous aurions la tragédie romantique, dans toutes ses beautés sauvages : à défaut de belles scènes nous trouverions peut-être de beaux effets, tandis qu'on ne nous offre au Boulevard que la triste caricature tragique et des squelettes qui cachent mal leur difformité sous l'oripeau et le clinquant qui les couvrent." (2)

(1) Journal de l'Empire, July 13, 1811.
(2) Journal des Débats, Aug. 10, 1817.

Beyond the melodramas of Pixérécourt and Caigniez, the critics had little reason for complaining of the presence of the unities. Pixérécourt, however, even at the end of his life, found his conscience perfectly clear as far as the unities were concerned. "Si j'en excepte Charles le-Téméraire et la Fille de l'exilé, j'ai respecté dans mes drames les trois unités autant qu'il m'a été possible. J'ai toujours pensé qu'il fallait une unité complète dans le travail complet d'une oeuvre dramatique. Mais c'est seulement dans la tragédie et dans la comédie à caractère, que toutes trois sont scrupuleusement observées. Dans la comédie d'intrigue, dans le drame et dans l'opéra-comique, on se contente en général des deux unités d'action et de temps. Celle de lieu est triste et monotone, et presque toujours invraisemblable ; on s'en est abstenu depuis longtemps. Sedaine se contentait des deux premières, et je n'ai jamais eu la prétention de faire mieux que lui; je n'ai voulu jamais que l'imiter." (1) Many times the subjects which Pixérécourt selected for his plays did not allow him to keep to the unities, but it is interesting to note his attitude regarding them, when we recall the attacks made upon them by the romanticists.

At first this question of the unities seems to have little to do with popular drama. Everything in the

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol IV, p. 496.

melodrama militated against the observance of the strict rules which had governed learned classical tragedy and consequently almost all popular tragedies have only the unity of interest. Yet it is all the more remarkable that the most important melodramatist should attempt to observe the unity of time and place, when possible, and that the critics should think of judging the plays at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté by the same standards as the tragedies at the Théâtre-Français .

The role of the music was another point which both the melodramatists and their critics failed to understand. Music was not an integral part of the genre, although many, in their attempt to define the word, melodrama, according to its etymology, held the opposite opinion. (1) The music was nothing more than a relic of the continuous musical accompaniment in pantomime, where stereotyped characters were associated with well-known popular airs. After the Revolution the amount of music in popular drama began to decrease, and by the time the melodrama had taken on its definite form there were only two distinct uses of music, in connection with it, namely for the introduction of characters and the accompani[illegible] of

(1) Cf. p. 70.

monologues. The first use was a direct inheritance from pantomime ; not only the hero and the heroine but most of the minor characters of melodrama were introduced by a few strains of orchestral music. A rollicking song or jig announced the arrival of the clown or valet while a death march heralded the advent of the villain. This incidental music, although familiar to England, was an innovation for France. Sheridan, in the Critic ridiculed the abuse of this music which had grown stereotyped in English drama during the eighteenth century. (1) The Boulevard soon

(1) Cf. The Critic, act II:

Puff: Now then for soft music.

Snerr : Pray, what's that for ?

Puff : It shows that Tilburina is coming — nothing introduces you a heroine like soft music. Here she comes.

Dangle ; And her confidante, I suppose.

Puff : To be sure, here they are — inconsolable to the minuet in Ariadne.

tired of this manner of introducing the characters and retained it only for the more important ones. Yet the idea was not in itself bad and the leitmotif of the Wagnerian music-drama is nothing more than a skillful working out of the same conception.

The scènes lyriques of the Revolution probably suggested the musical accompaniment of monologue. (1) The melodramatists, however, followed Benda's example and used the monologue and music simultaneously rather than alternatively. A plaintive air, or a folk-song, softly played by the orchestra increases the effect of a pathetic climax or situation. This kind of incidental music was extremely popular on the Boulevard, where it has persisted up to the present, and moreover it has also been introduced in the more serious drama of France and England. (2)

At first the music of the melodrama was considered

(1) Cf. p.62.

(2) Short passages of such incidental music are technically known as 'hurries'.

much more important, because the posters and programs mentioned the composer as well as the author . The title pages of the melodramas often contained notes such as these : "M marque les endroits où il y a de la symphonie ; (1) "M marque les endroits où il y a de la musique ; (2) "Tous les endroits marqués d'un —— indiquent la musique en action." (3) All the early editions of the separate works of Pixérécourt and Caigniez have the music indicated in the text. In later collections, such as the Chefs-d'oeuvre du répertoire des mélodrames (1825) and the Théâtre choisi of Pixérécourt (1841-43) there is rarely any mention of the music beyond the name of the composer.

The best known of these composers who did what might be called musical hack-work for popular dramas was Piccini. No little of the success of many of Pixérécourt's works was due to the efforts of this Italian. He became a close friend of the melodramatist and in 1840 wrote a preface for Robinson Crusoë, in which he expressed

(1) Caigniez, Androcles, ou le lion reconnaissant, an VII.
(2) Gobert et Dubois, Tippoo-Saib ou la prise de Seringapatam an XII.
(3) Cuvelier, C'est le diable, ou la bohémienne, an VI.

high esteem for Fixérécourt and his work. When Victor Hugo then desired a composer for the incidental music of his plays, it was by no means unnatural that he should turn to Pic̦inni, who certainly added to his reputation by the effective march at the end of the first act of Ruy Blas and the chanson des lavandières in the second act of the same work. Other less important composers for the melodrama were Ẓuisain, Gérardin , Lecour, Bianchi, Gaveaux, Darondeau. Sometimes the demands made upon these musicians were extreme. In Loaisel-Tréogate's Forêt périlleuse (1797) we find such directions as these : "ils (les brigands) défilent au son de l'orchestre, qui exécute une marche de nuit" ; "les brigands viennent au bruit d'une musique terrible" ; "une musique plus terrible encore que la première se fait entendre." No greater task is placed upon music to-day after the advent of modern program music. This descriptive music of the early melodrama was so important that the orchestral score, as well as the play, was printed, because we frequently find a note on the title-page to the effect that the full score may be procured at this or that music-dealer's. Financial reasons soon eliminated both the services of the composer and the printing of his music. Certain situations

occurred with such regularity that the managers of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté began to economize by using over and over again the same music. In the popular drama of France and England to-day the tirades of the villain and the laments of the heroine are accompanied by stereotyped music, some of which possibly comes down from the times of early melodrama.

The music of the melodrama was often held up to ridicule, "Si tout d'un coup, agissant à la fois, produit des sons sourds et lugubres, c'est que tyran approche, et tout l'auditoire frémit. Si l'harmonie est douce et moelleuse, l'amante infortunée ne tardera pas à se montrer et tous les coeurs s'attendrissent". (1) Others complained that 'la musique fait l'office de valet de chambre.' Jules Janin was especially bitter against the music of the melodrama. "La musique accompagnait toutes les angoisses multiples. Cette musique faite par les musiciens ad hoc, représentait de son mieux l'état de l'âme des personnages. Quand entrait le tyran, la trompette criait d'une façon lamentable, quand sortait la jeune fille menacée la flûte soupirait les plus doux accords. Cette

(1) Traité du mélodrame, p. 35.

musique avait d'abord été au mélodrame comme une entrave, le mélodrame la conserve comme une précieuse ressource. Il pouvait se passer des transitions et ne se donner aucune peine pour mettre un peu de logique dans son dialogue. Grâce aussi à cette musique le comédien pouvait se livrer à toute sa fougue." (1) The melodramatist, however, knew more about the tastes of their audiences than did the critics, so the music remained, never becoming an integral part of the melodrama but constituting a pleasant feature of it for the spectators of the Boulevard. The extension in the use of music in all forms of the drama offers some proof that music in tragedy and comedy has its effect upon audiences other than those of the Boulevard.

The question of style in the melodrama is another point upon which the melodramatists and their critics wasted much energy. Diderot, Sedaine, and Mercier claimed to have introduced into the drama natural dialogue and to have reproduced upon the stage the conversation of every day life. Pixérécourt pretended to follow their example. Many of the melodramatists, with their

(1) Quoted by Vapereau, Dictionnaire universelle des littératures, Paris, 1884, article on the melodrama.

lack of schooling possessed the aptitude for reproducing the lively speech of the lower classes in France with great exactness. The language of the petit peuple of Paris bristles with striking figures of speech and picturesque expressions which found their way into the melodrama and gave it life and color. The characters at the Ambigu-Comique were elemental and one-sided but they talked easily and naturally. Geoffroy, who often berated the popular dramatists for their poor style and bad grammar, admitted the superiority of the dialogue. In his criticism of Pixérécourt's la Citerne we read : "Le dialogue est rapide et souvent très spirituel" (1) Wit is almost entirely absent but the melodramatist had neither the ability nor the desire to imitate the clever speech of Beaumarchais' rascal or Marivaux's valets. The minor characters, such as the servants, the children, and the old men frequently used a patois which must certainly have appealed to the spectators of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté, many of whom spoke in the same manner.

(1) Journal des Débats, Jan. 15. 1809.

As an illustration of this, we may take a passage from Caignier's Enfans du bûcheron (1809) : "Qu'voulez, y a des jours où j'sis comme ça. Tant y a qu'n'voulions pas en avoir l'démenti ; eh bien ! voisin, ah ! mon Dieu ! quand j'y r'pense ; n'v'la-t-i'pas qu'à m'détache l'plus fier soufflet !..... allez, j'vous répronds qu'après ça j'n'ons plus jamais eu envie de rien avec elle." Lixécourt used broken French for the character of Vendredi in Robinson Crusoë (1805) "Voilà deux gâteaux d'orge et une petite bouteille de rhum que Robinson chargé moi d'apporter ici pour son dîner au retour de la chasse. Moi faire bien exactement tout ce que li ordonner li si bon maître ! sauver pauvre Vendredi des Caraïbes qui allaient le manger. Aussi Vendredi n'être plus à moi, Vendredi sauvage mais reconnaissant, être tout entier à Robinson, l'aimer de tout son coeur, donner son sang, tout, tout, jusqu'à dernière goutte pour son généreux maître." Lixécourt finally carried his efforts for a natural and realistic dialogue to a logical conclusion and introduced foreign languages. The third act of his Christophe Colomb (1811) begins the following conversation by two natives.

Yarako ---- Cati loura (Que lui veux-tu ?)

Yarako ----Amouliaca Azakia Kerebek (Demande la fille Azakia pour Kerebec).

Oranko ---- Qualaki (Bien)

Karaka ---- Chicalamai (J'y consens)"

In the preface to the play the author not only defends the use of a foreign tongue on the French stage but assured his public that the language was authentic and not a jargon like that of the Bourgeois gentilhomme. (1) Unfamiliar languages had been employed for humorous effects on the French stage before as for example in the Turkish ceremony of le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, (2) but never, I believe

(1) Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt vol. III, p. 369 ; "Le public pensera sans doute comme moi, qu'il eût été complètement ridicule de prêter notre langage à des hommes qui voient pour la première fois, des Européens."

(2) Cf. the Greek song in Lesage's Arlequin Roi de Serendib act III, scène IV in le Théâtre de la Foire, by Eugène d'Auriac, p. 97.

for serious or ordinary conversation. This method of bringing the dialogue nearer reality by the means of foreign languages and patois was too simple not to be abused by the melodramatists but even when they did not have recourse to such methods, they succeeded much better than any of the more literary dramatists, with the exception of Molière, in reproducing on the stage the language of every day life.

The public of the small popular theaters of Paris demanded something more than this, they required a few passages in the elevated style of classical tragedy. The sonorous phrase, the pretentious, noble sentiment, however, trite it may have been, thrilled them. Diderot could ignore the existence of the style noble when writing for the middle classes but the melodramatists had to remember that le peuple had a decided taste for bombast and grandiloquence. The action might even be temporarily suspended to allow the leading actor a monologue, provided it contained a sufficient amount of idealism about honor, justice, or providence. In fact, the presence of monologue in the melodrama, where there is such need for rapid action, is only explained by the desire on the part of the audience for the expression of noble sentiment in an inflated style. The villain of Pixérécourt's Monastère abandonné probably won the applause of the

Boulevard by his opening monologue. "Heureux âge où la privation d'un plaisir est le plus grand chagrin que l'on conçoive et que l'on puisse éprouver ! Ah! combien ces moeurs pures, cette paix du coeur ce tableau de l'innocence contrastent avec l'horrible situation de mon âme. Je ne puis supporter ces accents de joie." (1) Solomon in Caigniez's Jugement de Salomon (2) in the third act when called upon to decide the claims of the two mothers, begins with the praise of justice and a prayer for guidance, in a style well suited to the tastes of the Boulevard. "Mon frère ce n'est point sur nos affections que nous devons juger les actions humaines . La justice, cette sublime portion des attributs de la divinité doit être pure comme la source dont elle émane ..... Dieu protecteur d'Israël répands dans mon âme un rayon de ta divine lumière ; aide-moi à faire sortir la vérité du nuage qui l'enveloppe et ne permets pas, dans le jugement que je vais prononcer, que des paroles d'iniquité sortent de ma bouche." (3)

(1) Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt, vol. III, p. 4[illegible].

(2) Cf. p. 89.

(3) Le Jugement de Salomon, acte III, scène [illegible].

←—— This bantering about of the names of abstract virtues, these high-sounding phrases and bombastic utterances constituted the style noble du Boulevard. The prodigality of the hero's of melodrama has now passed into a proverb ; they could 'tear a passion to tatters' and 'out Herod-Herod'.

It would hardly be fair, however, to condemn all the monologues or narrative passages in the melodramas of the early period. We do find a few examples of a simple unaffected style, lacking in rhetorical figures but affective through its very lack of adornment. As a specimen of this style in Pixérécourt, we may take a speech from his Maures d' Espagne, where Zima, the wife of the Moorish prince, Abular, describes the fear and consternation among the Spaniards. "Cher Abular, explique-moi ce qui se passe ici, quel événement se prépare et quelle peut être la cause de l'agitation subite qui se fait remarquer dans la ville ? J'ai vu du haut d'une terrasse des mères éplorées abandonner leur demeure, se précipiter au hazard dans les rues, et courir çà et là comme des insensées, emportant avec elles leurs enfants au berceau.

Tandis que l'une à peine ouvre la porte d'une maison, semble demander au prophète de lui conserver les trois enfants qu'elle tient embrassés, une autre, serrant dans ses bras son fils unique, qu'elle voudrait pouvoir renfermer dans son sein, s'échappe et fuit avec la rapidité de l'éclair. Là, un faible enfant appelle sa mère d'une voix plaintive et touchante tandis que celle-ci les yeux égarés, avec l'accent du désespoir perce la foule, demande à chacun le fils qu'elle croit avoir perdu et que dans son délire, elle voit déjà tomber sous le fer des bourreaux. C'est en vain que les époux s'efforcent de calmer l'effroi de leurs compagnes ; celles-ci les repoussent avec fureur, s'arrachent de leurs bras, les couvrent d'imprécations, et s'éloignent sans leur permettre d'embrasser leurs enfants qu'elles entraînent avec force, Ce n'est partout que confusion et désordre de toutes parts éclatent des accents de rage et des cris de malédiction. Cet affreux tableau m'a glacé d'épouvante. De quoi s'agit-il ? Vous parliez de sacrifice ; qu'avez vous résolu dans ce fatal conseil ? hâte-toi de m'instruire ; mais surtout, ô mon Dieu ! fais que je ne sois point réduite, comme les mères que j'ai vues à l' horrible nécessité de repousser loin de moi, de haïr peut-être le père de mes enfants."(1) This succe

(1) Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt, vol. II., p. 41.

gives a fairly vivid description of a city in immediate danger or being attacked and points clearly and forcibly to the mother's fear and dread of war. Soignies, at his best, was much superior to Pixérécourt in the matter of style. For example, compare with the passage quoted above from les Veuves d'Espagne the pathetic account of Leila in le Jugement de Salomon when she describes the theft of her child. "Condamnée à l'indigence, je coulais auprès d'Hébron des jours ignorés, mais tranquilles, dans l'humble cabane que la bonne Débora voulut bien partager avec moi. Occupée de soins champêtres et bornant mes désirs aux seuls bienfaits que la nature partage à tout le monde, j'y serais encore heureuse si l'[illegible] n'eût [illegible] mon cœur. Il y a trois ans, le jour mémorable de la consécration du temple, je mis au monde un fils, que je reçus dans mes bras avec ivresse. J'étais loin de craindre pour ses jours : les roses de la santé brillaient sur son visage. Jugez de mon désespoir, quand, le lendemain, à mon réveil, je ne trouve à sa place qu'un enfant étranger que la mort a frappé. Je fis vainement entendre mes plaintes ; il passa pour constant que mon fils était mort. J'appris seulement hier qu'une scène

bien différente se passait à la même heure, chez Tamira qui habitait alors Hébron. Elle avait aussi, la veille, mis au monde un enfant, mais débile et donnant à peine des signes d'existence. Un homme à son service, nommé Kobar, qui nous connaissait très bien, partit précipitamment, courut toute la nuit, et le matin, à son retour, le berceau de Tamira offrit, aux yeux des assistans étonnés, un enfant plein de force et de santé. Si cet étrange concours de circonstances, à la même époque et dans des lieux si voisins ne portent pas, grand roi, la conviction dans votre âme, Ah ! croyez-en le coeur d'une mère que la nature ne peut tromper : chaque trait d'un enfant, chaque signe imperceptible aux yeux indifférens, une mère n'a besoin que de les voir un instant pour en conserver un souvenir qui ne s'efface jamais. La nature avait empreint mon fils de deux signes remarquables : je rencontre hier l'enfant dont Tamira se dit la mère ; une vive émotion me trouble à sa vue : j'examine ses traits ; mon agitation augmente ; les deux signes frappent enfin mes yeux ; un nouveau jour m'éclaire c'est mon fils que je tiens dans mes bras."(1)In the hands of even a mediocre actress of the Boulevard, this speech

(1) Chefs-d'oeuvre du répertoire des mélodrames, vol. V, p.59.

with its simplicity and sincerity would hold an audience. Geoffroy admitted the style in general of this melodrama to be good and intimated that the author showed ability which would not be out of place in a much more pretentious theater. Cuvelier, another melodramatist, whose reputation almost equalled that of Caigniez and Pixérécourt, was generally careless and indifferent in matters of style. The critics often berated him for his faulty grammar and bad taste. Yet even in some of his works appear passages which offer fairly good examples of a simple, dramatic style. In le Sacrifice d'Abraham, Sarah thanks the young women for their floral offerings as follows ; "Jeunes filles consacrées au culte saint, mon coeur ému accepte avec plaisir vos hommages et l'expression de votre fidèle attachment. J'ai recu l'invitation de mon époux de tout ordonner pour une fête auguste et solennelle ; elle doit éterniser la mémoire du prodige éclatant qui m'a rendu à la tendresse de ma famille, en me delivrant de l'esclavage. Tandis que nos serviteurs préparent le sacrifice, allez cueillir les fleurs qui doivent parer l'autel. Bientôt je serai près de vous pour diriger moi-même votre zèle". The young women withdraw and Sarah continues, "Le sang a cessé de couler. Nos guerriers sont vainqueurs, mon fils est rendu à mon amour .....

Pourquoi donc, au milieu de la joie universelle, Abraham seul semble-t-il éprouver encore les atteintes d'un profond chagrin ? il évite les regards de son épouse, de son fils, il se refuse à toutes nos consolations , tout à l'heure lorsqu'il me pressait dans ses bras, j'ai senti frémir sa main dans la mienne ; ses yeux se sont fixés un instant sur moi, et loin d'y trouver l'expression de ce bonheur que ma présence lui inspire, sa vue s'est détournée, et pour la première fois il repousse son épouse .... Je ne puis supporter plus long-tems le tourment affreux de l'incertitude ; je vais trouver Abraham, tomber à ses pieds, et si je l'ai offensé sans le savoir, solliciter mon pardon." (1) From these few quotations we see that the style of the melodrama was not universally bad and that at times it showed a simple and true eloquence.

To-day the style of a melodrama is largely a matter of indifference to the dramatic critics, because they see no connection between popular tragedy and literature, but in the early part of the nineteenth century this was not the case. Very grave doubts were entertained

(1) Chefs-d'oeuvre du répertoire des mélodrames, vol. XIV, p. 176-77.

for the welfare of the French language if the providers of the Boulevard theaters were allowed to continue the corruption of the language as well as demoralization of the lower classes. "Le style du mélodrame a-t-on dit, est une innovation dangereuse dans la langue", said Charles Nodier in his preface to Pixérécourt's edition of his own plays. The three satirical authors of le Traité du mélodrame gave as examples of the melodramatic style such glaring figures of speech as these : "L'oreiller du remords est rembourré d'épines", "La reconnaissance est un régistre à partie double," "La modestie est un des coupons de la vertu", "La noirceur du crime ne peut être effacée que par le savon du repentir," "Le soleil est un éternel réverbère," "Le noyau de l'espace ne peut être cassé que par le marteau de l'hypothèse," "Le sentiment est la soupape de l'âme." While these expressions were the result of the ingenuity of the authors of the Traité rather than of the ignorance of the melodramatists they illustrate a tendency which was almost always present on the Boulevard. Another parody from the same satire ridicules the monologues

(1) Theatre choisi de Pixérécourt, vol. I. p. IX.

of the popular theaters. "Oui..... Non!!,....Mais!,.... Non, non !.....Se peut-il ? Quoi !!..... Grands Dieux !! Malheureux, qu'ai-je fait ???? Barbare !!..... Hélas !... Jour affreux !! O nuit épouvantable !!.....Ah, que je souffre !! Mourons !! Je me meurs !!.....Je suis mort !! .....Aÿe, aÿ, aïe !!....." Passages almost identical with the above, with the exception of the punctuation which is no little help to the satire, do occur in the Boulevard dramas but are not to be found in Pixérécourt and Caigniez. Even if this inflated language did appear in the melodrama, it is not surprising when we consider the condition of France during this period. From 1800 to 1830 the nation itself was excessive in words as well as deeds. As Charles Nodier said, when defending Pixerécourt from the attacks made upon the dramatist for his careless and bombastic style ; "On parlait faux, c'était le caractère distinctif de l'époque. Les expressions de ce temps là s'étaient assorties à l'exagération vide et décousue des idées. L'ordre logique de la pensée avait fait place à une phraséologie creuse, mais sonore, dont le retentissement était une habitude et un besoin pour l'oreille publique." (1) It was well into the nineteenth century before the heroes of the melodrama ceased to use speech of the Directoire and the Jacobins. Nodier, however, exonerated

(1) Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt, vol. I, p. IX.

Pixérécourt from too much blame in this matter. "Je ne rappellerai pas que dans Tékéli et dans vingt autres pièces il a fait preuve d'un admirable talent d'élocution et de dialogue." (1) Pixérécourt was not a stern critic for himself and with a self-complacent sincerity placed his own works somewhat above those of his contemporaries. Toward the end of his life he believed that the standards of melodrama were being lowered and that the art of dialogue as he had practiced it was being lost by his unworthy successors. (2)

To-day the melodrama abounds in violent tirades and excessive language but the critics have ceased to criticize. Popular tragedy is now so far removed from literature that it would seem idle to reproach the melodramatists for their poor style. When melodrama entered the Comédie-Française, Hugo endowed it with a poetical language which alone caused it to last there for thirteen years.

A play at the Gaîté or the Ambigu-Comique might

(1) Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt, vol. I., p. V.

(2) " " " " vol. IV, p. 449.

have been succeeded, even if its author lacked the ability of Pixérécourt in dialogue and sham eloquence but a striking title was an absolute necessity. Exciting titles were no novelty for France, because in earlier times a good bishop had aroused the curiosity of the public by titles such as Lalombe, ou la femme honorable, la Tour des miroirs, le Juge incontinent, la Mort d'un libertin, l'Amphithéâtre. Eighteenth century dramatists had begun the movement of using titles, which, unlike those of classical tragedies, suggested the subject of the play. Le Père de famille, le Fils naturel, le Philosophe sans le savoir, and la Brouette du vinaigrier, show the first changes in this direction. Mercier, in the preface to la Brouette du vinaigrier (1775) admitted that he intended the title to attract attention. "On ne manquera pas, même avant d'avoir lu la pièce de dire : la Brouette du vinaigrier quel sujet ..... les personnages de ce drame sont trop bas. J'ai prévu le reproche et je l'ai bravé." The pre-revolutionary pantomimes were generally given proper names but during the Revolution the popular theaters began to use titles which would convey some idea of the contents of the play. Les Victimes cloîtrées, Encore un Curé, le Dernier Jugement des rois, were titles intended to

draw crowds. After the Revolution the melodramatists continued the use of such titles and their descendants today, as the titles of any of the popular tragedies being played at present in Paris will show, are still following their example. One explanation of the amount of energy and care which the early melodramatists spent upon this question is to be found in the method of advertising plays which was followed at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté. Both of these theaters were in the habit of announcing a new melodrama several months before its first performance. Notices were published in the press praising the new work and suggesting novelties in the scenery and costuming. Under such circumstances a well-chosen title was an important asset. La Gueule du lion, l'Homme à trois visages, la Femme à deux maris, les quatre vingt neuf victimes aroused the curiosity of the frequenters of the Boulevard.

These titles which were so helpful in making a melodrama a success, may be divided into certain classes. Proper names were sometimes used but only when historical, Biblical, or exotic. The more common names in the Bible especially in the more striking narrative passages, were,

of course, familiar to the public. After Caignez's Jugement de Salomon, we find a number of Biblical plays such as Daniel dans la fosse aux lions, (1817), le Triomphe de David (1803), le Sacrifice d'Abraham, (1816). In 1801 Chaussier had even entitled one of his plays, l'Enfant Jésus, ou le fils sans père, Exotic titles are rare, although Caignez used them somewhat, as for example,, Bourjahad et Cheridin, (1803) and Azendai (1818). Historical titles such as Charles le téméraire, ou le siège de Nancy, (1814) and Guillaume le conquérant are very frequently found. Pixérécourt was especially fond of such headings which lent an air of erudition to his plays. Mystery, which was such an important factor in holding the attention of the audience, was often suggested, as, for example, l'Inconnu ou les mystères (1822). Time was indicated in the title, sometimes to inform the spectators that the unity of time was not observed, sometimes merely to show that a great deal would take place during the action of the drama. Pixérécourt's Latude, ou 30 ans de captivite, (1834) la Fille de L'exile, ou huit mois en deux heures, (1819) have already been mentioned. (1) Additional examples

(1) Cf. pp. 97-98.

are 30 Vois dans une heure (1819) and 14 Ans de souffrance. The popularity of animals as actors is attested by many titles as Caigniez's la Vie voleuse (1816), Pixérécourt's le Chien de Montargis, Androclès, ou le lion reconnaissant (1804), le Chien du régiment (1829). The melodramatists, who were in the habit of exciting pity by giving prominent parts to the cripple, the blind, and other unfortunates, naturally employed titles such as l'Illustre aveugle (1806), la Muette de Sènes (1805), la Muette de la forêt (1828). Morality and optimism appear in la Forêt d'Hermanstadt, ou la fausse femme, Christophe Lubois, ou l'honnête cocher (1795), Tribunal invisible, ou le fils criminel (1800), Imposture et vérité (1814). From these examples may be seen how the popular dramatists sought to attract the Boulevard and here again we see a parallel in the drama of Hugo. The author of Hernani at first desired a more romantic title. The original manuscript has the Spanish inscription Tres para una and the handbills for the first performance announced Hernani, ou l'honneur Castillan. (1) The extravagance of the melodrama and the romantic

(1) Glachert, Paul et Victor, Le manuscrit autographe d'Hernani ; Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, vol. VII, p. 517.

drama in the matter of titles has disappeared but when we compare le Cid, Phèdre, Zinna with l'Ami des femmes, le Gendre de M. Poirier, la Guerre au flambeau, les Tenailles, les Corbeaux, le Voleur, we realize that in titles at least we have remained since 1843 more romantic than classical. In practice our modern dramatists agree with Geoffroy, who, in writing of the titles of the melodrama, remarked that striking titles were a petit charlatanisme pas tout à fait inutile and that dans tous les temps et dans tous les pays l'éclat des titres impose. (1)

Having chosen a suitable title the task of the melodramatist had only begun, because the manner in which he handled the plot and sustained the action could not be lacking in interest. It is here that we meet the chief characteristic of melodrama. (2) The plots at best seem nothing more than a collection of incidents grouped about a central figure. The action begins with remarkable quickness but never ends. The more thoughtful

(1) Journal des Débats, June 1[illegible], 1805.

(2) Cf. p. 7.

spectator, when he finds a moment's repose, questions himself as to the reason for the unheralded appearances and abrupt departures of the people on the stage. Likewise in the romantic drama too much happens with too little explanation. It is a long distance from the portrait gallery of Ruy Gomez to the crypt at Aix-la-Chapelle and the arrival of Don César by the chimney seems too accidental. According to Gautier both the actors and the audience lost themselves in the maze of events which took place in the dramas of Dumas père. "On va, on vient, on court, on monte, on descend, on se bat, on s'embrasse, on se poignarde, sans jamais, reprendre haleine ; personne ne s'assoit ; les acteurs se jettent en courant une moitié de phrase, un mot, une exclamation, dont ils n'ont pas le temps d'attendre la reponse." (1) The plot of the melodrama resembles that of the novel where the author has full liberty regarding his characters. The exploits of Lesage's picaro might have been arranged in almost any order without detracting from the interest or destroying the unity of the work. On the stage,

(1) Histoire de l'art dramatique en France, Vol. VI, p. 12

however, this intrusion of the author's remarks and critics is resented by the audience. The tortuous reasoning of the bandit, the king, and the old man before the adored lady [illegible] an offa For lack of development in the plot Pixérécourt and Caigniez substituted a multitude of scenes and climaxes. The melodrama becomes a drama à tiroir with so complicated a plan that even the authors were unable to unravel the various threads of their own fictions. Théophile Gautier found some difficulty in recalling the plot of Bourcholdy's Sonneurs de Saint Paul, but when he asked the assistance of the dramatist , the latter confessed his inability to remember the exact relation of the many incidents in the action. "Un plan simple lui paraissait par cela même défectueux." (1)

Since the plot was so long, it became an imperative necessity to render the exposition as clear and as rapid as possible. The pity or the curiosity of the audience had to be aroused at once. A conventional

(1) Th. Gautier, Histoire du romantisme, Paris, 1874, p. 17.

opening with a monologue by the good-hearted servant in which the plight of the hero is told and some suggestion given regarding an impending danger. Robyles, the niais of Frédéric's La Vallée du torrent (1816) begins the play with a monologue in which the names and the relationship of the principal characters are given. In les Enfers du Boulevard (1809) of Saignez and Lemaire the valet explains the contents of an important letter which has just been lost and the action immediately begins. Pixérécourt generally used one of these two methods of beginning his melodrama, for example, l'Homme à trois visages, ou le proscrit de Venise (1801) opens with a letter monologue and Robinson Crusoé (1805) with a niais monologue. A conversation between servants or between master and his master offered another good means of rapid exposition. The point to be particularly noted is the absence of the irrelevant at the beginning of a melodrama. By the end of the first act the author had not only started the action but carried the heroine through several exciting episodes.

The ending of early popular tragedy shows the same haste and rapidity. As soon as the hero has made the final triumph over the villain the curtain falls abruptly upon a brief remark by the hero or the niais

who points to the eternal ways of Providence. The dénouement heureux became a necessity. No esthetic consideration on the part of the spectators called for a catastrophe. The audiences of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique believed in a kind Providence rather than a pitiless Fate. In the end righteousness always won in the struggle against wickedness. The tender-hearted spectators even demanded that the melodramatist treat the villain leniently. He is rarely killed or imprisoned but generally dismissed by the hero who warns him against returning to his evil ways.

Between the beginning and the end of a melodrama many incidents and events were crowded together. Each act had one and at times two climaxes quite as important as the one at the end. The tragedies of the Boulevard were in the words of an obscure English dramatic critic of the eighteenth century busy plays. The characters passed through many vicissitudes and came out of them all successfully. The critic Hoffman bitterly complained of this crowding and padding of the plot. The characters according to him, resembled puppets on strings more than human beings. (1) Geoffroy likewise ridiculed

(1) Journal des Débats, March, 3, 1817.

this superfluity of events which rendered the plots incoherent. "Un faiseur de mélodrame opère dans un clin d'oeil une revolution où triomphe le crime : dans un clin d'oeil aussi il amène une révolution contraire qui fait triompher l'innocence et la vertu." (1) The many and sudden chanures increase the invraisemblance of the plots to such a point that many of them seem nothing more than caricatures.

In this long succession of events which filled the melodrama, we always find a mixture of the tragic and the comic. Already in the comédie larmoyante this mingling of the genres occurred. Mercier however, warned writers against the abuse of this very easy means of obtaining contrasts. "Il ne s'agit point, comme on l'a dit, de distribuer des plaisanteries dans une scène et des larmes dans une autre et d'étaler une bizarrure qui prouverait peu d'habileté : mais plutôt d'allier dans une même action le comique et l'attendrissement, le familier et le noble, de fondre plusieurs sentiments en un seul, de les fortifier l'un par l'autre et d'offrir ainsi une image plus réelle de nos passions mélangées et des différentes faces de la vie humaine. (2)

(1) Journal de l'Empire, March 17, 1811.

(2) Théâtre complet, (1778) vol. III, p. 230.

Geoffroy with his strict classical principles refused popular drama the right to relieve tragic scenes by levity and merriment. "On remarquera une scène où cet imbécile se fait dire de bonne aventure, ce qui dégénère en farce burlesque : ce mélange du tragique et du comique, reste de l'ancienne barbarie, pourrait aujourd'hui s'établir dans les mélodrames." (1) The public of the Boulevard theatres approved most heartily of this mixture and with a characteristic lack of restraint easily gave way to tears which were soon turned to laughter. Pixérécourt, who felt certain that the comic was an essential element of popular tragedy, ascribed the failure of his Maures d'Espagne (1804) to the absence of comedy. (2) "Sans doute la faute en est au genre de la pièce

(1) Journal des Débats, June 12, 1805.

(2) Les Maures d'Espagne, although given 20 times in France before 1841, was nevertheless considered a failure by its author. The standard of success as measured by the number of performances had risen greatly since the days of Corneille.

qui est tout à fait sévère tandis que mes autres drames sont tous mêlés de gaîté ; j'ai toujours procédé de l'école de Sedaine que je crois incontestablement la meilleure." (1) After Les Maures d' Espagne, Pixérécourt never repeated the experiment of a melodrama without comedy. The farces of the théâtre de la foire at the time when Molière was catering to the taste of those who were fond of laughter had never become unpopular on the Boulevard. The melodramatists might bring tears to the eyes of their audiences as often as they liked but they could not ignore the fact that their spectators were equally fond of broad farce and low comedy.

Another convention of the Boulevard which dated from the early théâtre de la foire was the scene or scenes in pantomime, which were retained in all the melodramas for pantomime as a distinct genre had not entirely disappeared on the Boulevard at the advent of melodrama. Both the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté continued to give pantomimes similar to those of Arnould even when the melodrama was most successful. These mute dramas, besides offering a change, had the advantage of being more spectacular and easier to comprehend than those in dialogue.

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. II, p. 15.

The two genres were so closely related that pantomimes were often changed into melodramas for instance, Les quatre Fils Aymon (1) was given during the early part of the nineteenth century both with dialogue and without, and Alfred le Grand(1817) after being refused in pantomime form was turned into a parody of popular drama. (2) Furthermore several characters of melodrama were necessarily limited to pantomime. After the success of l'Abbé de l'Epée at the Comédie Française the deaf and dumb began to figure as heroes or important characters at the popular theatres. The children relied more on their acting than their declamation and the various animals which peopled the melodrama were absolutely limited to pantomime, with the notable exception of the magpie in la Pie voleuse. Savages were generally silent although we have already seen (3) how the ambitious Pixérécourt made the Indians in Christophe Colomb (1815) speak their own language.

(1) Cf. p. 13.

(2) Journal des Débats, Jan. 10, 1817.

(3) Page 109.

Yet even there for the greater part of the action in which the Indians appeared pantomime was used. In his Coelina (1800), too, Franc sque is forced, on account of his dumbness, to make himself understood by the motion of his hands and the expression of his face(1). A band of children in les Maures d'Espagne (1802) acted only in pantomime. (2). Pixérécourt and his fellow-dramatists were even so fond of pantomime that they did not hesitate to interrupt the action for several scenes in order to introduce extraneous incidents, acted entirely without words. (3) But this is not strange for pantomime still retains its place in contemporary melodrama, in which almost invariably are found several lively scenes entirely without dialogue.

(1) Cf. p. 81.

(2) Cf. Courrier des spectacles, 21 florial, 1802.

(3) In Pixérécourt's Canal de Messine (1811) the dialogue is frequently interrupted by pantomime.

Another inheritance from the pre-revolutionary popular theater was the ballet. All the festivities of the melodrama were filled with dancing, which sometimes compared favorably with that at the Opéra. There was much rivalry on the Boulevard in regard to the ballet. Geoffroy, who jestingly remarked, sans ballets, point de salut à la Porte Saint-Martin, (1) commended Hullin, the composer and director of the dancing at that theater: "On admire toujours le parti qu'il sait tirer des moeurs et des costumes des peuples étrangers."(2) The dancing occupied such an important place that the ballet-master, as well as the author and composer, was mentioned in the newspaper criticisms. Les ballets sont de M. un tel was the usual ending for the criticism of a melodrama, except when the scenery was elaborate enough for the machinist to be cited among the other collaborators.

This strange mixture of tragedy, comedy, music, pantomime, and ballet was usually divided into three

(1) Journal des Debats, June 7, 1807.

(2) " " " , Oct. 14, 1807.

acts, another convention inherited from Arnould. (1) The ingenuity of the melodramatists might have increased the number of acts but the managers of the theaters were probably unwilling to add to the expense by providing additional scenery, for the audiences now expected a complete change of costumes and scenery in each act. All the plays of Pixérécourt, as well as those in the Répertoire des chef-d'oeuvre des mélodrames, are, with but few exceptions, written in three acts. When Caigniez used four in his Faux Alexis (1807), the critcs took no notice of the change but two years later they held up Pixérécourt to considerable ridicule, when he followed Caigniez's example. Pixérécourt heeded the critics and did not again attempt four acts until almost twenty years later. In 1830, however, he made a more radical change by dividing Judacin, ou les filles de la veuve into six tableaux. In his Dernières reflexions de l'auteur sur le melodrame, which he appended to the last volume of his Théâtre choisi he condemned very strongly this division into tableaux. "Ce que je dis des unités, je l'exige aussi

(1) Cf. p. 14.

au nom du bon goût c'est que toute pièce soit coupée en actes et non pas en tableaux. Le contraire atteste la médiocrité, la paresse, l'impéritie, l'absence de la raison, l'impossibilité de produire; je n'en fais pas un crime à personne, car tout le monde n'est pas appelé à devenir auteur dramatique, quoique chaque jour on dise le contraire." (1) Judacin being written in collaboration, Pixérécourt took no responsability for the substitution of six tableaux for three acts. In 1830 Carmouche and Courcy substituted chapitres for tableaux in order to show that the various divisions of the plays were not as closely related to one another as in the ordinary drama. "Voilà où nous sommes arrivés: autrefois on faisait une comédie, c'était le bon temps; puis la comédie s'appela un drame, puis ce ne fut qu'un mélodrame; ce mélodrame s'est changé en quelque chose qu'on a appelé tableaux; aujourd'hui nous n'avons même plus de tableaux, nous avons des chapitres de roman, et quels chapitres! "(2) Chapitre

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, p. 497.

(2) Journal des Débats, June 28, 1830.

was perhaps a more suitable term than even act because many of the melodramas, being dramatizations of popular novels, the divisions bore a greater resemblance to the chapters of a novel than the acts of a drama. After 1830 the popular tragedies were much longer and were divided into four, five and sometimes six acts together with a prologue. An additional reason for the shortness of the early melodrama may be found in the fact that the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique were in the habit of playing two dramas in one evening. When they began to give only one, naturally the playwrights were enabled to lengthen their works. After 1830 the English and German system of changing the scene during an act was adopted as, for example, Dumas' Tour de Nesle in five acts and nine tableaux, or Napoléon in six acts and twenty-three tableaux by the same author.(1)

(1) Dumas lengthened his plays to such an extent that he was compelled to divide Monte Christo into two soirées.

Pixerécourt was certainly more logical in discarding the word act when using tableau. When there were a large number of scenes, a division into acts became superfluous, as it does in Shakesperian drama where the spectator, without the aid of a program, would find it impossible to distinguish one act from another.

In spite of occasional variations we can state then that three was the usual number of acts in the early melodrama. Before 1830 we have only sporadic examples of a greater or smaller number of divisions. (1) It is a curious co-incident, if indeed it is nothing more than that, that Victor Hugo should have used three divisions for his prose dramas. Lucrèce Borgia is in three acts and Marie Tudor and Angelo in three journées, with two parts to each journée, thus making six divisions or tableaux as in Pixerecourt's Judaich (1). Ever the word journée, had been used on the Boulevard by Ducange and Dinaux in Trente ans, ou la vie d'un joueur, mélodrame en trois journées (1830).

(1) Pixerécourt twice attempted a smaller number of acts than three, le Suicide (1818) in two acts and la Huette de la forêt in one act.

(2) Cf. p. 138. Cf. also Bestand's l'Aiglon in six acts.

It may be argued that drama at the Comédie-Française never underwent to any great extent the influence of the theaters of the Boulevard in the matter of the unities, the use of music, and the number of acts, but there is no doubt whatsoever that the perfection of the mechanism of the stage in Paris to-day is due in large measure to the work of the melodramatists. Even their enemies had to admit the advance in the more material conditions of the drama as seen on the Boulevard. The genre bâtard had at least one good point. The taste for elaborate scenery had reached such a point that it often seemed as if dialogue and plot were being neglected. "La foule des spectateurs, ajoute Andrieux, s'occupe beaucoup plus aujourd'hui de la manière dont une pièce est représentée que de la pièce même. Cette disposition de la plus grande partie du public est très peu encourageante pour les auteurs et très peu favorable à l'art dramatique. "(1) Fabien Pillet with all his harsh criticism of the smaller theaters in Paris admitted la mise en scène

(1) Examen de quelques pensées sur l'art dramatique à l'occasion de la suite du Menteur, Paris, 1822; p. 3.

therein found to be superior to that of the great playhouses of the capital. Geoffroy frequently mentioned the excellent staging at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. In fact the melodramatists devoted so much attention to the details of costume and scenery that their plays according to their enemies were more intended for the eyes than the ears.

A glance at the stage-directions will show how ambitious the melodramatists were. Never before, not even at the Opéra had Parisians seen such realistic performances. For a long time they marvelled at scenes on board ship in Pixérécourt's Christophe Colomb (1815). Volcanoes offered the stage-mechanics abundant opportunity to display their skill. Pixérécourt required a representation of Mount Etna in Belvéder (1818) and of Mount Vesuvius in la Tête de mort (1827). In the latter play the irruption of the volcano was intended to be highly realistic. The stage-directions for the final tableau end thus: "Le théâtre est entièrement inondé par cette mer de bitume et de lave; une pluie de pierres embrasées et transparentes et de cendres rouges tombe de tous côtés. La lave du fond vient se réunir à celle qui est arrivée par derrière la tombe; alors les couches se succèdent:

cette mer de feu se gonfle et déborde dans toute la largeur du théâtre. La couleur rouge dont tous les objets sont frappés, le bruit épouvantable du volcan, les cris, l'agitation et le désespoir des personnages, chacun dans leur sens, tout concourt à former de cette effrayante convulsion de la nature un tableau horrible et tout-à-fait digne d'être comparé aux Enfers. "(1) In this description the author undoubtedly passed beyond the limits of even stage-mechanism at the Gaîté or the Ambigu-Comique. In the second act of la Fille de l'exilé (1818) Pixérécourt required the representation of a flood, the success of which was mentioned in a newspaper report of the play. "La décoration du second acte doit être considérée comme une merveille de perspective et de mécanisme. L'exhaussement progressif des eaux, l'écoulement des neiges et des rochers, le déracinement des arbres, le balancement de la planche de salut sur la surface liquide, tout est frappant d'imitation et de vérité. Beaucoup de pièces ont réussi avec des effets de machine moins étonnants: il n'est donc pas de vogue si soutenue et si populaire que l'on ne doive

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV., p. 359.

présager à un ouvrage où le talent de l'auteur est secondé par des accessoires aussi bien entendus."(1) Moonlight and sunlight were well imitated (2) and the rivalry for startling effects became so keen that we even read of a real water-fall upon the stage. "Ordinairement on représente au théâtre les effets d'eau et presque toujours, il faut l'avouer, assez ridiculement, par les gazes peintes, ou par une étoffe d'argent coulant sur un cylindre. Dans le troisième acte dont la décoration entièrement nouvelle est de l'effet le plus pittoresque, on voit et on entend une cascade d'eau qui sort du rocher; la nappe se déploie et tombe; on en sent la fraîcheur, et l'art n'a aucune part au prodige, si ce n'est pour la disposition des tuyaux qui conduisent l'eau du réservoir sur le théâtre."(3)

Pixérécourt insisted upon the importance of spectacular scenic effects and in his Théâtre choisi inserted long explanatory foot-notes describing how managers in

(1) Journal des Débats, March 16, 1819.

(2) Cf. the criticism of Pixérécourt's Belvéder in the Gazette de France, Dec. 11, 1818.

(3) Journal de Paris, Sept. 8, 1815.

the provinces might obtain the same results as at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. A note in la Fille de l'exilé (1818) occupies two pages in describing the mechanism of the stage-flood mentioned above (1) and long notes in Charles le Téméraire (1814) explain means of producing the inundation of a field and the effect of the heroine falling from a balcony. He considered that it was a most important duty of the dramatist to be present at the rehearsals in order to give attention to every detail of the staging. "Or ce n'est point là le theâtre, qui n'est autre, selon moi, qu'une représentation exacte et véridique de la nature. A toutes ces qualités essentielles, je joins l'esprit d'ordre si nécessaire en toute affaire, puis le goût et la sévérité qui doivent régner dans les répétitions et qui deviennent un élément de succès presque certain quand on sait en faire un bon usage. Je soutiens que l'entente de ce que l'on appelle la mise en scène, suffit pour faire éviter les écueils si dangereux dans ce métier difficile et scabreux." Cuvelier made an innovation which gave opportunities for scenic display.

(1) Cf. p. 143.

At the end of the drama he placed an elaborate pantomime or formal tableau; his Sacrifice d'Abraham (1816) closes with an allegory of Heaven and a view of the inner sanctuary of Solomon's Temple, and, the end of les Machabées (1817) shows the crowning of the hero and his wife in the presence of angels and martyrs. Such scenes in spite of their bad taste were staged so effectively that they held the attention of the audience. In Hugo's dramas we meet a similar use of the tableau, as for example, the end of the first act in Ruy Blas. The Opéra had opened the way for these spectacular scenes, although it had never reached the point of putting Heaven and the angels on the stage. Fabien Pillet in 1802 rebuked the popular dramatists for their poor imitations of the Opéra (2)but soon after that date he would have been

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV.,p. 494: Dernières réflexions de l'auteur sur le mélodrame.

(2) Le Coup de fouet, ou revue de tous les théâtres de Paris, Paris, 1802: "Ces singes de l'Opéra, copient si burlesquement leur modèle que loin d'être le pendant ou la copie du tableau ils n'en sont que la caricature."

forced to admit the superiority of the Boulevard in the question of scenery. The melodramatists soon learned the secret of making a poor play a success by skilful advertisement of the elaborate staging. This development of the mise en scène, is, as we shall see later, (1) perhaps the most important feature of early popular tragedy from the point of view of romantic drama. Without the experiments of Pixérécourt and Caigniez and the stage-managers of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique, the Comédie-Française would have found it almost impossible to stage Hernani and Ruy Blas.

Turning from the form and the material conditions of the melodrama let us examine some of its more fundamental characteristics, such as its characters, its morality and its plots. In the treatment of the various classes of society we find perfect impartiality; the aristocracy and the royalty were not abused and held up to ridicule as in the drama of the Revolution, and the middle classes were not idealized as in the drame bourgeois or satirized as in seventeenth century comedy.

(1) Cf. p. 352.

Since any phase of the drama, however, tends to draw a favorable picture of the people who support it, the melodrama took many of its heroes and heroines from the lower classes. Satire in any form is generally lacking, because all the energy was expended in punishing vice. Good and bad according to the melodramatists could be found in all strata of society, kings and queens appear in the same light as valets and maid-servants. All of the characters are hardly more than silhouettes, the heroes being the epitome of goodness and the villains monsters of crime. In the portrayal of character as well as the morality there were no nuances.'Vice is vice on the Boulevard' said Thackeray in describing melodrama in Paris. (1) It will hardly be necessary to describe the large number of types which the melodramatists used to exemplify vice and virtue. The famous tyrants of Pixérécourt who figured so prominently in satire, are colorless and not nearly as ferocious as the critics would have them,while Caigniez' tender-hearted heroines are very stupid young women who do right because of their incapacity to do wrong. Psychological analysis is entire-

(1) Paris Sketch-Book, chapter on the French drama and melodrama.

ly absent. The dramatists knew only the elemental passions. The drama is always external; the principal characters are never shown in any moral struggle but only in difficulties and adverse circumstances into which an unkind fate has thrown them.

Among the many one-sided characters of the melodrama, there was one which originated in this popular tragedy and has become as definitely associated with it as the confident with classical tragedy or the raisonneur with the école de bon sens. The niais is a combination of the fool, the buffoon and the simple-hearted but faithful servant, it is the role of the premier comique. The niais often opens the play with a humorous monologue and sometimes after a dramatic climax in the plot, relieves the tension like the drunken porter in Macbeth. At times during the action he displays a courage and a presence of mind which wins applause. He voices the opinions of the peuple, and was therefore congenial to the audience of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. In Tékéli (1804) (1) Pixérécourt, through the niais, gives the opinion of

(1) Cf., p.87.

the common people on the question of war — the opinion of those whom Maupassant called the chair à canon. Bras-de-fer, an orderly, complains that he is forced to fight. He's no poltroon but he confesses he's timid. "Mon maître m'a forcé de suivre sa compagnie; comme si tous me regardaient je vous demande un peu pourquoi il faut que je me batte ou que je me fasse battre, pour savoir si les Hongrois nommeront leur roi plutôt que l'Empereur; qu'est-ce que cela me fait à moi? je n'ai pas la moindre prétention à la couronne; aussi peu m'importe de quelle manière la chose se décide. Si je pouvais trouver dans ce château un abri solitaire et tranquille, pour y attendre en paix l'issue de la bataille, cela me conviendrait beaucoup; parce qu'alors, si la ville est prise, je serai du nombre des vainqueurs; si nous sommes vaincus, je resterai prisonnier, et j'aime mieux cela que de me battre. "(1) Bras-de-fer probably found in the audience many who sympathised with him and agreed that the stake in war was not worth fighting for. As a domestic servant the nègre is a model of faithfulness and devotion. In class-

(1) Act. III, scène XII.

ical comedy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the valets and maid-servants fared badly in comparison with the *niais*; although clever and witty they were bent on cheating their masters and mistresses. (1) Even as far back as 1773 Mercier objected to this: "Nous ne croyons pas que le mensonge et la bassesse soient nécessairement attachés à la condition domestique" (2). Pixérécourt always presents the servants in a good light. Babylas for example in *la Vallée du torrent* first appears as the loquacious old menial, whose whims and imprudence are supported because of long years of faithful service but at the end of the melodrama he fools the villain, lays a trap for him and finally succeeds in capturing him. Pixérécourt toward the end of his career as a dramatist abandoned the *niais*, or rather changed it into the intelligent type of servant entirely lacking in humor. In the work of the other melodramatists the

(1) Cf. Celler, Ludovic; *les Valets au théâtre*, 1875.

(2) *Essai sur l'art dramatique*, 1773.

niais degenerated into a clown. Nicole Brazier regretted the disappearance of the original niais. "Ce que je regrette le plus aujourd'hui dans le mélodrame, c'est l'absence totale du niais obligé. Les niais du mélodrame étaient, quoi qu'on en dise, une délicieuse création. Je ne sais pas pourquoi on les a chassés du Boulevard; quand on voudra, on pourra les retrouver; les niais ne meurent jamais en France. Les niais sont morts, vivent les niais! jamais la race des niais ne se perdra... Ils changent de tréteaux, voilà tout."(1)

The niais as ... already said, is the only original character of melodrama. It seems strange therefore that it should have disappeared, when types from contemporary faces still remain. Madame Angot, the ambitious femme des halles and Nicodème, the principal character in Nicodème dans la lune, have not yet been forgotten. Pixérécourt complained that his successors had lost the art of the early melo dramatists

(1) N. Brazier, Chroniques des petits théâtres de Paris, pp. 309-10.

in creating life-like people on the stage. "Tous les personnages modernes sont fondus dans le même moule; jamais de naturel ou de gaîté: le ministre et le paysan, le soldat et l'orateur ne font qu'un. Il me semble entendre toujours, et incessamment, un professeur de rhétorique; son style est exact, souvent abondant et fleuri; mais son langage est le même partout."(1) A comparison of Pixérécourt's and Caigniez' dramas with those of their successors does not show that Pixérécourt had any ground for complaint. The kings, the nobles, the bourgeois, and the servants in the melodrama always used the language and expressed the ideals of the audiences of the Boulevard. The popular playwrights did not possess the ability to individualize their characters nor did they see the necessity of doing so, because with the quick succession of events the personnages of the melodrama never became really wellknown to the audience.

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, p. 494.

Another type of character conspicuous in the melodrama was that of the unhappy or suffering child. The child-actor was certain to touch the hearts of the audience. Before the advent of the melodrama we find the clever and precocious child in comedy like la petite Louison in le Malade imaginaire but on the Boulevard we meet for the first time the serious child, who, through its innocence and sincerity, brings about reconciliations and turns men from their evil ways. In Pixérécourt's Maures d'Espagne, ou le pouvoir de l'enfance (1804) the children of the Spaniards go to the Moorish camp to plead for the lives of their parents. The Moorish prince, who has yielded to their appeal, closes the play with an exhortation to remember l'aimable empire que l'enfance exerce sur tour les coeurs. Alexandre Duval was much impressed by a similar scene in Kotzebue's les Hussites de Naumbourg and translated it into French for one of the smaller theaters in Paris. (1) In Pixérécourt's Charles-le-Téméraire, ou le siège de Nancy the four year old son of the heroine is prominent

(1) Cf. Duval, A., Oeuvres, vol. V, p. 207.

in the pantomime and even enters into the dialogue. Schiller had made an effective scene out of the apple-shooting incident in Wilhelm Tell, so Pixérécourt imitated the German playwright in a scene where Charles meditates blowing off the head of a little boy by means of a cannon. The newspaper critic Martainville complimented la petite Jenny, a diminutive actress who played the role of the lad. "On a couru au théâtre de la Gaîté pour le Chien de Montargis; on y courra maintenant pour voir et entendre un enfant qui joue avec une intelligence rare à cet âge, le rôle du fils de Léontine." (1) Children were mentioned in titles as, for example, les Maures d'Espagne, ou le pouvoir de l'enfance, (1804), Victor, ou l'enfant du mystère (1800) Judacin, ou les filles de la veuve (1830). Indeed we meet children in every possible condition, Hapdé's l'Enfant prodigue, (1803), Moline's Deux enfants pour un (1803), Ribié's l'Enfant du bonheur (1797), les Enfants du bûcheron (1809) of Caigniez and Lemaire, and la Belle-mère et les deux orphelins, (1808) of Caigniez. The orphan, or child whose paternity was

(1) Courrier des Spectacles, 21 floréal, an XII.

questioned, always proved successful in a melodrama. Unfortunately the child has persisted in popular tragedy and even entered more serious drama.

Another means of touching the hearts at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique was the use of characters suffering from some physical affliction. Instead of the innocence and helplessness of the child there is substituted the misfortune of the deaf and dumb and the blind. The former, as we have already mentioned, did not, because of their pantomime seem, out of place in the melodrama which still retained the use of pantomime to a considerable extent (1) but where the dramatist, as in Caigniez Illustre aveugle (1806) and Frédéric's Aveugle du Tyrol, (1807) centered his play around a blind person, his attempt to work upon the feelings of his audience was too patent even for the Boulevard. Yet the blind character has re-appeared on the popular stage at various intervals. For example the majority of the pathetic scenes in the best known melodrama of the latter part of the nineteenth century , les Deux

(1) Cf. p.33.

orphlines (1874) by d'Ennery and Cormon, show Louise, the blind orphan, unhappy and ill-treated. The minor characters are often cripples who accept their affliction in a happy-go-lucky way which amuses the audience. Babylas, the niais of la Vallée du torrent jokes good-naturedly about his wooden leg.

The melodramatists did not stop at the blind, the deaf, and the crippled, they even, descended so far as to put animals into their productions. The horse had added to the majesty and completeness of a stage-setting out-side of France, as in Henry V, Egmont, and Wilhelm Tell but never had they or any other animals entered into the plot. "J'avoue cependant que nos grands hommes ont fait d'immenses progrès; l'admission des chiens, des corbeaux et des pies ouvre une vaste carrière aux nouveaux mélodramaturges: autrefois nous n'avions pas assez d'esprit pour en donner aux bêtes; mais comme l'observent très-bien M M. A! A! A! grâce aux lumières du siècle, les bêtes ne nous choquent plus. "(1) Pixérécourt must be blamed for this unfor—

(1) Hoffman, F. B., Oeuvres, vol. V, p. 414.

tunate introduction of animal actors. In le Chien de Montargis (1814) he dramatized the well-known story concerning the discovery of the murderer of Aubri de Montdidier by means of a dog. The dramatist, foreseeing the critics' attack on the score of invraisemblance filled the theater with hand-bills containing a brief historical account of this intelligent dog. (1) Charles Nodier, who, as we know from le Chien de Brisquet, was fond of dogs, tells us, in a preface to the play written for Pixéréccurt's edition of his melodramas, about the dog's acting. "La première scène du second acte offre un spectacle à coup sûr nouveau jusqu'à présent; on voit Dragon, le fidèle chien d'Aubri, arriver sur la scène, gratter à la porte de l'auberge où logeait son maître, s'élancer à la sonnette, tirer par la jupe la maîtresse qui lui ouvre, et la conduire vers le lieu où le meurtre est commis. Peu d'instants après, on apercoit, au fond du théâtre Dragon qui poursuit Macaire épouvanté. "(2)

(1) In his Théâtre choisi, vol. III p. 119, he added a short bibliography of works in which the episode is mentioned.

(2) Théâtre choisi, vol. III, p. 107.

Dragon became the laughing stock of the critics, who were amused at the spectacle of a play of Pixérécourt degenerating into a trained animal performance. (1) The role of Dragon was short and not absolutely necessary, because the episode described above by Nodier might easily have been related instead of acted, but such a novelty as a trained dog on the stage was too certain of success to be neglected. Nine years before Pixérécourt had put the following note in the first act of Robinson Crusoë": Si l'on peut trouver un chien docile et intelligent, on l'emploiera dans cette scène, il suivra Robinson en portant dans sa gueule un gros oiseau de mer que son maître a tué, puis il ira se coucher dans l'enceinte quand Vendredi lui aura pris son gibier pour le mettre dans la hotte de Robinson." Apparently this chien docile et intelligent was not found because all the newspapers which spoke of Robinson's parrot and his share in the dialogue, made no reference to any other animal actor. After le Chien de

(1) The Almanach des spectacles (1815) remarks that Dragon cannot be criticized for "les innombrables fautes de français dont les autres artistes de ce théâtre se rendent journellement coupables."

Montargis animals became a part of the stock in trade of the popular playwright (1) and were considered, together with children, the blind, and the deaf and dumb, as mechanical means for obtaining pathos, Such innovations as these helped to widen the gulf which already existed between literary and popular drama and to prevent the melodrama from being classed as even the lowest form of dramatic amusement. Pixérécourt, who was largely responsible for this intrusion of the circus at the Boulevard theatres, had little reason for complaining of harsh treatment at the hands of the critics. The only excuse which may be offered is that the existence of the theaters and the success of the melodramas depended upon novelty and that both managers and authors, confronted by a serious financial problem, were forced to make concessions to popular taste.

The melodrama, by such concessions as these, often became an offense to good taste and common sense, yet it always showed a high moral tone. The critics

(1) Cf. the titles quoted above p. 133; la Pie voleuse, le Chien du régiment, Androclès, ou le lion reconnaissant.

disagreed as to the advisability of allowing the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique to continue the corruption of the dramatic taste and to aid in bringing about the financial ruin of the Comédie-Francaise but they all agreed as to the moral effect of popular tragedy upon the lower classes. Geoffroy early called attention to this; "Si les mélodrames choquent l'esprit et le goût, du moins ils ne gâtent pas le coeur; ils entretiennent dans le peuple l'horreur pour les scélérats et les tyrans, la pitié pour les innocens et pour les malheureux." (1) Nodier, in his introduction to Pixérécourt's Théâtre choisi could not emphasize the artistic merits of his friends' plays but could heartily commend their morals. "Je ne sais, quel rang la postérité réserve à M. de Pixérécourt, parmi les écrivains de son siècle; mais il y a bien des années que l'Académie Française lui doit le prix Monthyon. Je n'ai point d'objections contre les gros livres de statistique chiffresque d'ambitieuse métaphysique et de philanthropie fastueuse dont la vogue a succédé à celle du mélodrame. Je crois même sincèrement aux

(1) Journal de l'Empire, March 24, 1809.

immenses avantages que le genre humain a retirés de leur lecture, quand il les a lus, soit pour son amélioration matérielle, soit pour son bonheur moral; mais il est une créance dont j'aurais bien plus de peine à me départir; c'est que si une mission d'influence utile et réellement sociale a été donnée de nos jours à un homme de lettres, c'est M. de Pixérécourt qui l'a reçue. "(1) Nodier believed that the melodrama was an important factor in bringing back to a normal moral condition the people who had just passed through the Revolution. Those who believed that the end of the kings and the aristocracy meant the beginning of a millenium were somewhat consoled by the idealism and optimism of the popular stage. In the melodrama at least, however far it might be removed from reality, the rights of the poor and the innocent were protected. According to Nodier the statistics showed comparatively little crime during the reign of the melodrama. (2)

(1) Théâtre choisi, Vol. I, p. IV.

(2) Théâtre choisi, Vol. I, p. V.

He even related the now well-known anecdote which demonstrated that the people themselves were conscious of the fact that Pixérécourt was a moral teacher as well as a dramatist. "Il n'est personne qui n'ait pu lire dans son journal ce mot profond d'un témoin en matière criminelle qui racontait qu'on lui avait proposé un crime, et qu'il s'était écrié pour toute réponse: Malheureux tu n'es donc jamais allé à la Gaîté, tu n'as donc jamais vu représenter une pièce de Pixérécourt, Je dis qu'un Théâtre pareil est un monument. "(1)

This elevated moral tone in popular dramatic performance was an innovation on the part of the melodramatists and their immediate predecessors, Arnould and Audinot. The farce, the vaudeville, the parade and the older types of pantomime, while indifferent to morals, in general, had often been grossly indecent. Both Dorothée and le Maréchal-des-logis were written to show the final triumph of innocence and while they did not succeed in driving from the Boulevard the genre poissard, they opened the way for the morality of the melodrama. The final sentences of the Boulevard dramas

(1) op. cit., vol. I, p. VI.

always called upon the audience to behold the workings of a kind Providence, of a Dieu des pauvres gens. Frédéric ended his Fils banni (1815) with this platitude: "Enfin des jours purs vont succéder à tant d'orages: Justino tu deviendras l'époux de Céleste, et si le Ciel t'accorde un fils, apprends - lui de bonne heure que l'enfant qui méconnait son père est indigne d'être compté parmi les hommes." Caigniez closed his Forêt d'Hermanstadt (1805) with an expression of his belief in the intuition of the human heart: "Chère épouse, une secrète inspiration du Ciel semblait, avertir mon coeur du choix qu'il devait faire entre vous et notre indigne rival. L'imposture a beau faire, elle peut abuser un instant, mais elle n'aura jamais les charmes de la vérité." The hackneyed conventional endings, while they always remained dear to the hearts of audiences at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique soon became the butt of the satirist. For example, the mock-hero of Martainville's parody of the melodrama entitled Rodéric et Cunégonde (1805), shouts to the stage-hands as they are lowering the curtain on the

last act, "Un moment, étourdi que je suis, j'oubliais la sentence banale de la fin. Mes amis, ceci vous prouve jusqu'à l'évidence, qu'il existe une Providence, dont la puissance veille sur l'innocence." Despite this and many parodies the authors of the Boulevard took their role as moral teachers very seriously. The anonymous editor of Chefs-d'oeuvre du répertoire des mélodrames in his preface writes that la saine morale est sa boussole. Pixerécourt maintained that even the worst melodramas were harmless morally. "Il y a, j'en conviens, beaucoup de melodrames insignifians, ennuyeux même, mais du moins ils sont sans danger pour les moeurs. "(1) The joint authors (2) of le Courrier de Naples (1822) even used popular drama as a means for inducing the government to make some reparation for a miscarriage of justice. They believed in the innocence of a certain Lesurques, who, being accused of complicity in

(1) Guerre au mélodrame, p. 19.

(2) Boirie, d'Aubigny, and Poujol.

a highway robbery, was unable to prove an alibi and so was executed in spite of the testimony of the other robbers who insisted that he was innocent. After Lesurques' execution, his wife and children had been deprived of all his property and for twenty-four years had unsuccessfully attempted to recover it, although the judges then admitted the innocence of the father. When a number of literary men in 1822 began a movement toward assisting Lesurques' family, the authors of le Courrier de Naples, as they say in their preface, thought there could be no more effective way of bringing the attention of the public to the matter than by dramatizing a correct version of the story which would leave no doubt as to the innocence of the man who had been executed. Not all the melodramatists believed in the ethical power of their works to the extent of these collaborators but they all accepted to greater or less degree the mission of the moral teacher.

The idea of making the theater an école de moeurs did not originate on the Boulevard. In fact we might almost say that it originated with the drama

itself, for, at least, in tradegy and high comedy it is always present. Diderot and his school, however, was the first to overemphasize the moral power of the stage. Mercier in the preface to le Juge formulates the doctrine of the drame bourgeois: "Il est du devoir de l'homme de lettres de s'appliquer à ranimer les moeurs et les principes de chaque condition; il affermit ainsi la base de la société dans laquelle il vit et il contribue autant qu'il est en lui, à maintenir l'ordre public, hors de tout avantage particulier." Pixérécourt began his career with this high ideal: "C'est avec des idées religieuses et providentielles; c'est avec des sentiments moraux que je me suis lancé dans la carrière épineuse du théâtre. "(1) His practice was consistent with his theory and each one of his many plays was written avowedly for the purpose of teaching some elemental truth. Yet like all men he was misunderstood, and, the melodrama was accused of immorality. Virtue needed to be contrasted with vice, upright heroes with wicked villains.

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV., p. 493.

Crime and sin were as essential to the melodrama as the grotesque was to romantic drama. Some of the detractors of popular tragedy complained that vice, although always punished in the last act, was presented in all the other acts under far too favorable a light. Mrs. Grundy did not find the villains as hideous as she wished. More gifted men than Pixérécourt and Caigniez have found this same difficulty in making the sinner unattractive. Milton made a signal failure of it. Crime and criminals occupied so much of the melodrama that they soon seemed indispensable to it and hence the name Boulevard du Crime which was applied to the Boulevard du Temple. (1) Boulevard du Crime was too happy an expression and in spite of the protests on the part of the melodramatists it has persisted up to the present day.

Pixérécourt was much grieved at what seemed to be a wilful misunderstanding of his purpose. He was much troubled over the moral laxity in romantic drama and his last words on the subject of the theater contain

(1) Almanach des Spectacles, 1823. Cf. Beaulieu, E., les Théâtres du Boulevard du Crime, Paris, 1905.

a severe rebuke to those authors who were misusing their power and influence. "J'en dis autant de tous les sujets composés anjourd'hui pour le théâtre. Jadis on choisissait ce qui était bon; mais dans les drames modernes, on ne trouve que des crimes monstrueux qui révoltent la morale et la pudeur. Toujours et partout l'adultère, le viol, l'inceste, le parricide, la prostitution, les vices les plus éhontés, plus sales, plus dégoûtants, l'un que l'autre. Qu'en est-il resulté? Que les mères de familles ont déserté les spectacles où les jeunes filles ne pouvaient plus se présenter sans scandale et sans danger. Malheureusement il existe à Paris une immense quantité de femmes galantes et libertines qui ont suffi pour accréditer ce genre sale et obscène et faire obtenir un grand nombre de représentations à des pièces que repoussaient le goût et la morale."(1) Yet he did not lose faith in the goodness of the common people - and, as a challenge to those who had done so, he wrote Latude, ou trente-cinq ans de captivité (1834), the great success of which

(1) Théâtre choisi, Vol. IV, p. 497.

furnished him with abundant proof that the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique might be brought back into the straight and narrow path, if the playwrights so desired.

The moral preoccupation of the early melodrama is a natural development in the popular theater, whose non-critical audiences seek simple amusement and listen with satisfaction to the reiteration of their own optimistic and commonplace views on life. The question of the compatibility of the theater and morals is still an open question. Rousseau had no doubts in the matter, while the author of la Dame aux camélias always considered himself first of all as a reformer. Caignez and Pixérécourt made a sincere attempt to give their plays an ethical import and in emphasizing this feature they lost sight of other essential points. The certainty on the part of the spectators that the last act would bring about the proper rewards and punishments robbed every drama of originality and prevented any great interest or curiosity in the unfolding of plot. In this way the early melodramatists probably defeated

their own purpose and opened the way for the lurid and highly-colored plays of Dumas, père, such as la Tour de Nesle.

The didactic attitude of the melodramatist and his moral purpose restricted him in the choice of subjects. He viewed the question of love with horror and brought it forward only in stiff, conventional manner. There were no lovers at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique, because all the characters were so concerned with honor and justice that love never existed for them. Pixéréccurt shared with Manzoni that distrust of innocent passion, and went to the extent of writing an entire play without a single use of the word, amour. "Ce qui est étonnant, et peut-être unique dans son genre, c'est que le mot amour n'y est pas même prononcé. Ce ressort universel des pièces de théâtre a été mis de côté par l'auteur La piété filiale, la bonne amitié, la gratitude et la douce sensibilité en font seules le charme et les frais. "(1) The melodramatists, at least, should not

(1) Geoffroy, Journal des Débats, Jan. 5, 1805. Cf. also Geoffroy criticism in le Journal de l'Empire. Oct. 30, 1810.

be included in that general condemnation so often passed on French playwrights by foreign critics that the French stage has always been occupied with love to the exclusion of other subjects.

Outside of this absorbing topic, however, the popular playwrights had abundant material. National history, fiction, and the incidents of contemporary life furnished them with suitable plots in which to introduce the same situations, the same characters, and the same endings. Titles, costumes, and scenery changed but little else did. It seems hardly credible that the people themselves did not revolt against this lack of diversity. Historical melodrama, which was by far the most popular form of drama on the Boulevard furnishes us with many examples of this repetition and similarity. History was used by Pixérécourt merely as a mask under which the time-worn plots were partially disguised. The audiences of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique, in spite of their scanty knowledge of their national history, found pleasure in seeing Henri IV and Saint-Louis on the stage of their own theaters and

they were fascinated by great names. "L'auteur est en droit de commettre quelques anachronismes, quand il les emploie à rapprocher deux grands personnages, dont les noms seuls couvrent toute l'affiche. "(1) The ignorance of the spectators gave the dramatists liberty to re-arrange historical events, as the lack of geographical knowledge of Elizabethan audiences permitted Shakespeare to give Bohemia a coast. (2) The Journal de Paris in 1815 deemed it necessary to warn the public against these perversions of history: "Depuis quelque temps les auteurs des Boulevards se sont lassés de nous donner des sujets d'invention; ils mettent maintenant l'histoire en pièce. Malheur à ceux qui croiront à leurs contes dramatiques; on court risque en voulant

(1) Traité du mélodrame, p. 13.

(2) "Mais sur les boulevards, les anachronismes sont presque inconnus, l'on ne s'y occupe pas de si peu de chose". Almanach des spectacles, 1815, p. 303.

parler d'histoire de faire d'après eux d'étranges bévues. "(1) Geoffroy, on the other hand, admitted the faulty and inaccurate history of the Boulevard but defended it on the score that the popular drama, however weak its historical basis might be, stimulated an interest in the nation's past. (2)

Pixérécourt's Charles-le-Téméraire, ou le siège de Nancy (1814) illustrates this quasi-historical drama. Pour conserver surtout cette vérité histori-

(1) Dec. 15, 1815, criticism of Jean-sans-peur, duc de Bourgogne, ou le pont de Montereau.

(2) "C'est ainsi qu'en allant à la Gaîté, on peut faire un cours d'histoire, non que l'histoire soit fidèlement conservée sur ce théâtre et sur les autres, mais parce que le théâtre est un motif d'étudier l'histoire, pour voir en quoi le poète l'a falsifiée: on peut aussi être sûr d'engager efficacement les jeunes gens à lire un beau morceau d'histoire en le leur présentant comme une préparation à la représentation d'une pièce de théâtre." Journal des Débats, June 2, 1809.

que si précieuse the author consulted authorities ranging from Commines and manuscript histories to modern works and even gave a short bibliography of the period. In addition we find in his Théâtre choisi a lettre stratégique by General Jomini and a notice stratégique by Colonel Bergère both accompanied by diagrams showing the position of the armies at the Battle of Nancy (1). Frequent foot-notes, such as historique, propres paroles du duc de Bourgogne, extraites d'un manuscrit du temps, ces détails sont historiques, show how closely the text followed contemporary historians' accounts. Pixérécourt himself pointed out the only anachronism, that is, the presence of Commines, at both the raising of the siege of Nancy and the death of Charles the Bold. The melodramatist could not resist the temptation of putting on the stage the Tacite francois and of even making him the raisonneur and moralist who would curb the temper and the cruelty of Charles. This anachronism is entirely permissible, because it is neither unnatural nor offensive to the historical background of the play but a fiction which does offend and which robs the drama of any historical claims in the introduction

of two fictitious characters who absorb the interest of the spectator. Commines mentions a certain Cifron of Nancy who was hanged by the cruel Duke of Burgundy and according to Pixérécourt, il est tout naturel de croire que Cifron était marié. This supposition gives rise to others; Cifron's wife, Leontine seeks vengeance and shows herself to be a kind of Jeanne d'Arc and Wilhelm Tell combined. In the first act this Leontine goes in disguise to Charles' camp to rescue her young son who is being held as a hostage, in the second she sees her son and many of the inhabitants of Nancy saved from the cruelty of Charles by the intercession of Commines and finally in the last act she dons a knight's armor, fights the Duke single-handed, deals him his death-blow and then, raising her visor in order to disclose her identity, exclaims, "Auparavant, reconnais Leontine, J'ai vengé mon époux." An avenging wife and a devoted mother might be found in any epoch and would be quite as interesting without the pseudo-historical setting, which is at best nothing more than a device to attract the people. This form of advertise-

ment was carried even still further by Pixéréccourt in connection with Latude, ou trente-cinq ans de captivité (1834). The story of Latude was not altered because it was sufficiently dramatic of itself and because it was too well-known to admit of any important change. The reality of the drama was impressed upon the audience by turning the foyer of the Gaîté into an historical museum where were exhibited genuine relics such as "l'échelle de 180 pieds que Latude parvint à construire en dix neuf mois en effilant tout son linge dont il fit 1400 pieds de corde," "l'échelle de bois en sept morceaux à charnières et tenons, au moyen de laquelle le fugitif monta du fossé sur le parapet." (1) There were sixteen objects in all which served to excite the pity and arouse the enthusiasm of the spectators and which helped to turn a performance of Latude into a patriotic demonstration. This play is still given in Paris and the fact that it has lasted for seventy years is explained by its patriotism rather than by any other quality. Caignez showed much greater

(1) Journal de Paris, Nov. 20, 1834.

frankness than his rival and had some misgivings in using the term mélodrame historique. A note to la Forêt d'Hermanstad (1805) is intended to put both the reader and the spectator on guard. "L'aventure plus qu'extraordinaire attribuée par un auteur allemand à la mère de Charlemagne, aventure qu'on peut se rappeler d'avoir vue citée dans nos journaux il y a quelques mois, a donné l'idée de cette pièce. Ce n'est point sans doute un sujet historique, à moins de considérer comme tels des contes bizarres dont les vieilles chroniques ont parfois consacré la tradition." His Illustre aveugle contained a similar note: "Une tradition historique a fait naître l'idée de ce mélodrame. Le fait, tel que le fournit l'histoire, est ici raconté par Rodolphe dans la scène VII du premier acte; mais les inductions qu'on lui en fait tirer, et tous les incidens qui résultent de ces inductions, qu'on suppose fondées, sont d'invention." The other melodramatists did not claim the historical accuracy of Pixérécourt nor offer the excuses of Caigniez but simply wrote mélodrame historique with such titles as la Mort de Turenne (1797), le Siège de la Rochelle (1802), Guillaume le Conquérant

(1804), la Bataille (1809), le Maréchal de Luxembourg (1817), le Maréchal de Villars, ou la bataille de Denain (1817). In connection with these historical titles it is interesting to note the use made of American history, as for example in l'Héroïne de Boston, ou les Français au Canada (1801), la Révolte de Boston, ou la jeune hospitalière (1820), and Washington, ou l'orpheline de Pennsylvanie. The adjective historique soon acquired so broad a meaning that it was applied to drama based upon possibility or probability and was even used in connection with Caignez' Pie voleuse (1815) and Corbeaux accusateurs (1816) both based upon pure fiction.

This use of history on the Boulevard may be characterized as an effective means of advertisement and nothing more. The names and the costumes are accurate but there is no reconstruction of a period. A fiction of the author usually absorbs the attention and subordinates the historical events. Shakespeare, with all his inaccuracies and anachronisms, often caught the spirit of an age, as in Julius Caesar and Anthony and Cleopatra but the melodramatists did not even possess

this means of atoning for their faults. Pixerécourt and Caigniez have not been the only guilty ones in this respect. Ruy Blas despite the claims of its author, may perhaps be historical only in a manner similar to Charles-le-Téméraire and la Forêt d'Hermanstad

Another source of plots was the Bible. Caigniez' Jugement de Salomon (1802) has already been mentioned and it was pointed out that the interest was those parts of the plot which had nothing to do with the Biblical account of Solomon's judgment. (1) Caigniez' Triomphe de David (1805) and Plancher-Valcour's Esther (1802) being accurate dramatizations of Biblical episodes, were failures, Daniel dans la fosse aux lions (1817) had a succès de curiosité and Cuvelier's Sacrifice d'Abraham (1816) pleased the Boulevard with its picture of Heaven in the last act. In all these plays the use of Biblical names and episodes only served to give the appearance of a serious purpose, religious discussions being carefully excluded from them all. The public revolted when Chaussier in 1802 attempted to dramatize the story of the birth of Christ and Pixerécourt gave

(1) Cf. p. 86.

his reason for not translating Kotzebue's play on the subject of the Hussites that it was founded upon a religious war and that it was extrêmement délicat et peut-être inconvenant de traiter cette matière sur un théâtre francais (1). Biblical melodrama, like historical, was generally fictitious in everything except the unimportant details.

Another source of plots suitable to popular tragedy was contemporary fiction. Co-incident with the growth of theaters for the people was the beginning of the popular novel. Even before the Revolution Restif de la Bretonne had written for the peuple but like Mercier his bitterness and pessimism prevented him from gaining the readers he desired. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Ducray-Duminil, Ducange, Mme Cottin, Mme de Genlis and many less important writers flooded France with long, involved novels filled with countless improbable adventures. These prolific novelists were stern moralists and as the Journal des Débats once remarked: "Si la jeunesse qui croît sous nos yeux

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. II, p. 16.

n'est pas un jour parfaite, ce ne sera pas faute de livres d'éducation." (1) The strong resemblance between these novels and the average melodrama suggested to the authors of the Gaîte and the Ambigu-Comique the idea of utilizing the plots of these long, wild stories. The dramatization of a much read popular novel possessed several distinct advantages. First of all the playwright needed to use no powers of invention or imagination because the novelist gave him such an abundance of material for a plot that his only difficulty was choosing what he found most appropriate. In fact, some novels were so rich in this respect that two and even three melodramas were taken from a single book. Moreover, the success of the melodrama was aided by the popularity of the original work. Then as now the public displayed a curiosity regarding the manner in which the story was handled by the dramatist. Characters, which had been met in reading, seemed old friends when they appeared on the stage.

Pixérécourt made many such dramatizations. His initial play, Sélico, ou les nègres généreux was

(1) Feb. 17, 1817.

taken from a short story by Florian, while le Moine ou la victime de l'orgueil (1797) and le Château des Apennins, ou les mystères d'Udolphe (1798) originated in works of Lewis and Radcliffe respectively. Sometimes the novelist and playwright joined together to give their work all the success possible. When Pixérécourt turned Ducray-Duminil's Coelina into a melodrama, the latter wrote the following criticism of it: "Nous nous contenterons de dire que l'auteur a tiré un parti étonnant de ce roman, qui offrait les plus grands difficultés, pour la première scène et ce sont ces difficultés vaincues avec art qui font du drame de Coelina le meilleur ouvrage quiait été joué aux boulevards, et le rendent digne de nos premiers théâtres, tant par l'intérêt qu'il présente que par la manière habile avec laquelle il est conduit. "(1) This co-operation seemed to profit both authors. Before Coelina (1800) Pixérécourt had dramatized in 1797 Ducray-Duminil's Victor, ou l'enfant de la forêt and in 1801 turned les Orphelins du hameau by the same author into a successful melodrama entitled le Pélerin blanc, ou les orphelins du

(1) Journal des petites affiches, 19 fructidor, 1800.

hameau. Having exhausted the supply of available novels by Ducray-Duminil, Pixérécourt turned to other writers of popular fiction for his plots. The anonymous Paul, ou la ferme abandonnée gave him la Femme à deux maris (1803), Florian, who had always been a source of inspiration to him, supplied the material for his Maures d'Espagne (1804) and Mme Cottin's Elizabeth became on the Boulevard la Fille de l'exilé, ou huit mois en deux heures (1818). Pixérécourt's example was quickly followed and even a glance at the titles of many of the plays of this period will show how extensive this practice became of dramatizing popular novels.

The melodramatists, after having exhausted the resources of Ducray-Duminil, Mme Cottin and similar writers, turned to Nodier, Chateaubriand, and de Maistre. The literature in France from 1800 to 1830 contained certain elements which were thoroughly popular. The outlaw and the brigand, the men unjustly ostracized from society were heroes after the Revolution. Charles Nodier's story of one of these typical pirates and outcasts was exactly what the Boulevard liked. "Le fameux

roman de Jean Sbogar s'était à peine montré sur notre horizon littéraire, que mille auteurs de tous genres, en lisant les hauts faits de cet illustre brigand, brochaient déjà le canevas dramatique sur lequel ils devaient bientôt l'offrir à l'impatiente admiration d'un public toujours avide du merveilleux et de l'extraordinaire (1). Cuvelier's dramatization of this work was the first to be given but was a failure at its first performance at the Ambigu-Comique in 1818. Two months later Pixérécourt was able to demonstrate his superiority over his rival by the success of his Belveder founded upon the same novel. Nodier always sympathized with the people and interested himself in the popular theaters, hence he probably made no objection to these plays but how annoyed the haughty Chateaubriand must have been to read of Endore et Cymodocée, pantomime à grand spectacle which the program of the Cirque Olympique announced to be based upon an episode in les Martyrs. Xavier de Maistre was brought down to the Boulevard by Décomberosse who in 1822 arranged le Lépreux de

(1) Courrier des Spectacles, Dec. 11, 1818.

la vallée d'Aoste. The prestige of names like Nodier, Chateaubriand, and de Maistre was of great assistance, no matter how much the stories of these men were changed and mutilated. By the middle of the century such dramatizations were sufficiently in vogue for us to see the novels of Balzac and Hugo in the form of dramas; Paul Foucher, for example, turned Notre-Dame into a drame en cinq actes et quinze tableaux for the Ambigu-Comique in 1850, and in the next year Balzac's Peau de chagrin was played at the same theater. Fiction appears commonly enough on the stage of today and is not always confined to the Boulevard. The Odéon has recently played with success le Rêve de l'Abbé Mouret and Ramuntcho. The melodramatists even went outside of France and as it will be shown in the discussion of the influence of England on popular drama, made use of Defoe, Scott and Goodwin. In so doing, of course, they were merely unconsciously following Voltaire in his Nanine, the idea of which he borrowed from Richardson, ~~and from Boissy's Lamala, ou la vertu éprouvée~~. Victor Hugo himself attempted to

put Kenilworth on the stage in his Amy Robsart before he began Hernani. (1)

The playwrights did not limit themselves to these popular and literary novels of France and England, they even went to the unwritten fictions of the folk, those popular traditions which still live among the people. Some of these traditions have almost disappeared but not wholly because they have left in the language a saying or proverb. Gaigniez and Daubigny from the expression, la messe de la pie and from a current tradition which explained this saying, built the plot of their Pie voleuse (1818), in the introduction to which they make the following statement. "Tout le monde sait qu'on disait autrefois à Paris une Messe de la Pie, en réparation de l'erreur des juges qui avaient condamné à mort une malheureuse servante, injustement accusée de vols faits par une pie. Quoi qu'on parle diversement de l'époque et des circonstances de ce procès, qu'il a eu lieu; car il n'est pas présumable que la Messe de la Pie eut

(1) Cf. Glachant, Paul et Victor, Théâtre de Victor Hugo, Chap. I.

été fondée sans motif. La tradition la plus répandue est que le vol consistait en cuillers, en fourchettes, et en pièces de monnaie d'argent, qu'on a retrouvées, mais trop tard, dans une gouttière, où cet oiseau les avait successivement cachées. C'est cette dernière version, que nous avons choisie." In the play based upon the folk-story we see Annette, accused by her master of stealing spoons and forks, and finally cast into prison. Her innocence and the guilt of the mag-pie is proven by Blaisot, the mais, who, suspecting the mag-pie in the church tower, hides money in the hollow of a tree and shortly after sees the bird fly to the tree and take the money back to the tower. Blaisot repeats his experiment for the benefit of the authorities who then release Annette. La Pie voleuse contained nothing above the intelligence of its spectators, all its personnages and its situations were familiar, and its vindication of the young servant woman was especially pleasing. After many performances on the Boulevard, it was translated into a great number of the languages of Europe and served as a libretto

for Rossini's Gazza ladra. An unmistakable evidence of the popularity of this melodrama is found in two parodies which were given the same year as the original play. (1) Domestic dramas such as this one of Caigniez and Daubigny came nearer to the ideal popular tragedy than any other class of play produced at the Gaîte and the Ambigu-Comique. Martainville was quite right in thus commending this type: "C'est un grand avantage pour les théâtres qui semblent consacrés au peuple, quoique la bonne compagnie se plaise souvent à être peuple et qu'elle ait quelquefois de bonnes raisons pour ne pas croire qu'elle déroge: c'est, dis-je, un grand avantage pour ces théâtres de rencontrer des sujets de pièces populaires. Peut-être est-ce là le vrai genre de ces spectacles que je ne veux pas cependant priver du droit de représenter les faits historiques auxquels se rattachent des noms qui honorent la patrie. Il est toujours bon d'annoblir les idées du peuple et de rendre ses plaisirs utiles

(1) Le Singe voleur at the Théâtre des Variétés and Margot, ou la pie borgne at the Théâtre du Vaudeville.

à ses moeurs. "(1) The success of la Pie voleuse led Caigniez to write les Corbeaux accusateurs, (1816) in which the crows, instead of being guilty like the mag-pie, help to convict two murderers. (2) Although

(1) Journal de Paris, May 4, 1815.

(2) The preface gives the tradition: "Un riche négociant de cette ville (Orléans), dit la chronique, au moment où deux scélérats l'assassinaient dans la forêt de Cercottes, vit passer les corbeaux qu'il invoqua comme les seuls témoins de l'attentat commis sur sa personne. Les assassins ne craignant pas que de pareils témoins vinssent jamais déposer contre eux, se trouvèrent un jour, plusieurs années après, dans la foule rassemblée pour l'exécution d'un criminel. L'un des deux voyant passer les corbeaux les fit remarquer à l'autre, et lui dit: 'Vois donc, vois donc, les témoins de M. un tel'. Ces mots qui rappelaient le nom et le malheur d'un négociant qui avait joui de l'estime générale, furent entendus, et rapportés aux magistrats d'Orléans. Les deux scélérats furent arrêtés. Forces d'expliquer le sens de leur

the story of the grateful lion, which Victor Hugo has so well re-told, can hardly be called popular tradition in France of the nineteenth century, its substance is closely related to the plots of the two plays mentioned above and consequently Cogniez as early as 1804 dramatized the well-known episode of the lion who in the amphitheater at Rome refused to kill Septimus who had once in the desert drawn a thorn from the animal's paw. Androclès, ou le lion reconnaissant did not meet with the same success as melodramas of this type ordinarily did, perhaps because the episode seemed too unlikely even to those who believed in thieving mag-pies. In general, however these domestic dramas were received on the Boulevard as well as the historical plays of Pixérécourt.

étrange discours, ils se contredirent et finirent par s'avouer coupables. C'est ainsi que les corbeaux devinrent en quelque sorte leurs accusateurs, ou du moins furent cause qu'ils subirent enfin le supplice qu'ils avaient mérité."

Closely connected with popular tradition is the fairy-story. Marvellous accounts of the aid given human beings by elves, sprites and other supernatural beings have always been in favor with the folk as well as with children. Some of the critics of the Boulevard looked down upon this fairy melodrama but the dramatists on the other hand found in it excitement and local color. (1) In 1822 Pixérécourt put on the stage a famous story from Arabian Nights in Ali-Baba, ou les quarante voleurs, which he called a melodrama, although it would be somewhat difficult to distinguish it from a féérie. The latter may perhaps be characterized by an excessive use of the marvelous whereas the fairy melodrama used as little of the supernatural as possible. In both, however, the scenery and the costumes were of primary impor —

(1) Cf. Almanach des Spectacles, 1815: "C'est une mine bien féconde pour les auteurs de mélodrames que les contes de fées. Ils ont beau puiser, ils y trouvent toujours de quoi exploiter."

tance. Besides Ali-Baba we find les Trois talismans, ou le génie et le pêcheur (1815) of Leblanc, Frédégilde, ou le démon familier (1798) of Hapdé and le Génie Azouf (1796) of Cuvelier. In 1806 Guesdon dramatized the story of little Cinderilla in his Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre. This type of the melodrama cannot be considered of any greater importance or influence than the present day féeries at the Châtelet and the Drury Lane yet it was sufficiently flourishing during this period to deserve mention.

The local color which was an important feature of the fairy melodrama and which had always been present in popular drama since the pre-revolutionary pantomimes gave rise to a type of melodrama in which the plot was laid out-side of France and in which attention was paid to foreign manners and customs. Mercier had called attention to the advantage of plots laid out-side of France. "Il en pourroit être de même de l'Anglais, de l'Espagnol, de l'Allemand, du Napolitain, du Vénitien, du Russe, qu'on pourroit mettre sur la scène avec leurs moeurs, non pour oser

peut-être insolément les juger d'après les nôtres, mais plutôt pour apprendre qu'il nous manque encore bien des vertus civiles, à nous, qui nous croyons si policés et qui pensons donner la loi en ce genre au reste de l'Europe. "(1) Arnould heeded this advice and after him the melodramatists found that their audiences liked the novelty of foreign peoples and their habits. The foreigner in the melodrama is of course nothing more than a Frenchman in strange costumes and unfamiliar surroundings because many of the dramatists knew no more about what was outside of France than Figaro did about the English language. Pixérécourt's Ruines de Babylone (1810) is Oriental in the names of the characters, Haroun - Al - Raschid Zaïda, Isouf, etc., and in the stage-settings as intérieur des jardins du sérail and the like but in the point of view, in the motives of action, it is thoroughly French. Besides the Orient which we find in this play and in most of the fairy melodramas, we see Italy in Berthélemy-Hadot's Cosme de Médicis (1802),

(1) Essai sur l'art dramatique, 1773; p. 111.

Prussia in Boirie's Jeunesse du grand Frédéric (1807), Portugal in Bonilly's Désastre de Lisbonne (1804) and Scotland in Charrin's Forêt d'Edimbourg (1803). (1) The plots of these exotic melodramas were practically identical with the other varieties which have been previously mentioned, yet the change of scene with the new costumes lent an air of novelty to these old stories of suffering innocence which finally triumphs.

This struggle between right and wrong was never absent from the popular theaters but is most prominent in that type of melodrama in which the temporary triumph of evil is due to a miscarriage of justice. The collection of Guyot and Petival, entitled les Causes célèbres, became la mine féconde que tous les dramaturges du Boulevard sont convenus d'exploiter. (2)

(1) Cf. also Scribe's Koulikian, ou les Tartares, 1813; Baron Taylor's les Serfs, ou les Scandinaves, Varey's Metsutho, ou les Polonais, 1808.

(2) Journal des Débats, March 31, 1816.

The most famous of all the causes célèbres, the one best known to the people of the Revolution was dramatized by Victor (1) in 1819 in his Calas in the preface to which the author tells how dangerous a subject he considered the story of Calas even at so late a date. "Tout le monde connaît l'histoire de l'infortuné Calas; les mémoires, les lettres et les déclarations juridiques de sa veuve et de ses enfans ont été dans toutes les mains; Voltaire a pris leur défense, c'est dire assez combien cette cause est devenue célèbre. En traitant ce sujet, je n'ai cherché à réveiller aucun sentiment; j'ai soigneusement évité tout ce qui pouvait blesser ou offenser qui que ce soit." Calas seemed so real, so terrible that a voice in the parterre shouted, "Cela n'est pas vrai, monsieur, c'est affreux. Ce mélodrame vaut un cours de morale." (2) Since the well known episode at a performance of les Victimes Cloîtrées during the Revo-

(1) Victor is generally supposed to be a pseudonym of Ducange.

(2) Le Constitutionel. Jan. 6, 1820.

lution one is tempted to doubt the sincerity of such remarks on the part of spectators. At any rate Calas was a success and, thrilled audiences even without the aid of confederates in the pit. Frédéric took the subject of his Vallée du Torrent (1816) from the same collection, as did Fournier, and Frédéric for their Famille d'Anglade, ou le Vol (1816). The Journal des Débats disparaged this class of melodramas; "Le mélodrame judiciaire est toujours un Boulevard dans une haute faveur. Les termes de la procédure ont remplacé les maximes cruelles du tyran barbare, et les conseillers de grand'chambre ont succédé aux traîtres sans principes et sans délicatesse, et trop souvent sans remords. L'hiver dernier nous a montré les infortunes de la famille Calas; cet été nous expose les malheurs de la famille Sirvien. "(1) The judicial melodrama persisted in spite of such criticism; it lacked the brillancy of certain other varieties, yet the strong moral lesson together with the strong sympathy which the audience felt for the innocent victims made up for other deficiencies.

(1) Journal des Débats, Aug. 3, 1820.

There still remain melodramas which cannot be classed under any of these heads, for the melodramatists showed much ingenuity and imagination in their search for new plots yet these types mentioned above, such as the historical, the Biblical, the exotic, the fairy, the judicial, and that based upon populaire fiction, are the most important. M. Faguet believes there was a development or rather a change in the subjects treated on the Boulevard, for he cannot understand how the popular theaters could have exerted any influence on the Comédie-Française, if the melodrama had not become historical and tragedy had not begun to use plots based upon more modern history than that of the Greeks and the Romans. (1) In proof of his statement that melodrama became more historical after 1815 he cites various plays which seem to prove his point. He is sometimes misled by the title into thinking the play historical and furthermore he limits himself to Pixérécourt, Caigniez and Ducange. A more careful and extensive study of

(1) Propos de théâtre, Vol. III, p. 220.

the classes of popular drama shows that since the faits historiques, which were given on the Boulevard at the time of the Revolution, historical or pseudo-historical melodrama has always been in more or less favor. Pixérécourt insisted not upon a development, but upon a degeneration in popular tragedy. (1) His jealousy made him blind to the merits of his fellow-playwrights who, especially toward the end of his life, had become quite as capable and skilful as himself in writing for the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. The only change which can be seen during this period of thirty years, from the Revolution to Hernani, is the advance made in the material conditions; the scenery and other accessories were improved, the spectacle became more brillant but the heroes, the villains, and the plots remained the same. In fact the conservatism of the genre seems all the more remarkable, as it began with no fixed rules and conventions. As we have seen in the case of the number of acts any

(1) Cf. p. 210.

change in form or content was made very gradually. Even after 1830 there has been no development, no integral change in the structure of popular tragedy. The melodramatist of to-day like his predecessors is intent upon making his play successful for a short period, he sacrifices everything to effect and ignores the unities, style and all the other traditions of the French stage. The music and the happy ending have been retained and even the characters and the situations remain the same, although authors attempt to disguise them by modernizing them. Some of the old plays are still given intact while others are slightly changed, new incidents added and a new title substituted for the old one. The forgetful audiences of the Boulevard every few years applaud these old melodramas in their renewed form. While many playwrights have stolen plots, characters, and incidents from the voluminous Lope de Vega, many more have plagiarized these early and less well known melodramatists.

Chapter III.

The Influence of Foreign Literatures upon the Melodrama.

Dupuis and Cotonet, those two simple-hearted men whose troubles over the question of romanticism Musset has pictured to us, confessed that at one time they believed the new movement in literature during the early part of the nineteenth century to be nothing more than the imitation of foreign literature (1).

(1) "Nous crûmes, jusqu'en 1830, que le romanticisme était l'imitation des Allemands, et nous y ajoutâmes les Anglais, sur le conseil qu'on nous en donna. Il est incontestable, en effet, que ces deux peuples ont dans leur poésie un caractère particulier, et qu'ils ne ressemblent ni aux Grecs ni aux Romains, ni aux Français" Première lettre de Dupuis et Cotonet au directeur de la Revue des Deux Mondes.

When Musset wrote those satirical letters of Dupuis and Cotonet the conservative element in France and even the members of the new school tended to over-emphasize the influence of Germany and England upon the romantic literature of France in general and upon romantic drama in particular. Since then, however, there has been a movement in the opposite direction and the poetry of Lamartine and the drama of Hugo have been explained more as an evolution of the eighteenth century than an incorporation of the ideals of the Revolution. M. des Granges in the passage mentioned above suggests that the influence of the melodrama upon romantic drama was undoubtedly much greater than that of Shakespeare and Goethe (1). While he may be right in this statement, yet the question as to the influence of English and German drama upon the melodrama must first be investigated.

In discussing the origin of the popular tragedy there was nothing which had to be explained

(1) Cf. p. .

by foreign influence. No phase of popular drama up to the end of the Revolution is wholly dependent upon the literature which came to France from without her boundaries. Melodrama was the expression of the Revolution in a form of drama suited to the humble classes of Paris. After 1789 the people in the countries contiguous to France felt the effect of the successful storming of the Bastille, they became freer and demanded a drama, such as the melodrama, which would express their new ideal. Popular tragedy flourished throughout Europe and in each separate country appear certain characteristics which are common to all and which are to be explained, not as the influence of one country upon another, but as fundamental conditions of drama intended for the folk. The happy ending, for example, is always to be found because the demand for it always exists in the audience of any popular theater, whether in London, Berlin, or Paris. During the first third of the nineteenth century no one country possessed a monopoly of popular drama. It is fundamentally

wrong to speak of it as an importation from abroad. To say, for example, that "Pixérécourt and Victor Ducange had made themselves masters of the melodrama imported from Germany" (1) is to ignore completely the important development of pantomime at the end of the eighteenth century. Before these two playwrights began their careers, melodrama in the crude form of pantomime with dialogue already existed. France did not borrow from the North, she evolved her own popular drama and brought it to perfection without the aid of her neighbors.

This erroneous opinion regarding the foreign origin of melodrama may have arisen from the attitude of Frenchmen toward the dramatic literature of England and Germany. The high degree of perfection of Corneille and Racine, their refinement and absolute correctness has made the Frenchman an exacting critic who is shocked at the absence in Shakespeare and Schiller of what he considers essential qualities. He ignores consciously or unconsciously the fact that

(1) Matthews, B. French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century, p. 2.

this lack of formal beauty is the price which Germany and England pay for a national drama. English drama is so essentially national, so complete an expression of the aspirations of the race that since Gorboduc it has never departed from popular tradition nor fallen under the domination of classicism. The yoke of Seneca and Aristotle has never been effectually imposed upon English drama. The early English tragedies written in imitation of Latin models, those of the eighteenth century which showed the influence of classical French drama have left no traces in the evolution of English dramatic literature. Cato and all the others might disappear without any loss whatsoever. Those material conditions which so helped the propaganda of classicism in France were entirely lacking in England. Louis XIV and his court were imbued with the new learning which the Renaissance had bequeathed to Europe, and the theater became a royal monopoly and an amusement solely for the educated classes. The dramatist wrote for a distinguished audience which judged by

artistic standards. In England there were no royal patrons, no rich and educated class which fostered the drama. The audiences were composed of members from every class of society, but the poorly educated were in such large numbers that their tastes could not be ignored. They did not understand the ravings of Hamlet, the pessimism of Jacques, and the madness of King Lear, but they laughed heartily at the street brawls in Romeo and Juliet, the grave-digger in Hamlet and shuddered at murders and deaths in the fifth act. When Shakespeare became too obtuse, when he ignored the popular audience, he had to yield to Beaumont and Fletcher who were willing to cater to it. These popular qualities which are always to be found in English drama, misled France into the error of making no distinction between it and a melodrama on the Boulevard. This is Alexandre Duval's explanation of the popularity of French melodrama in Germany and England. "Je suis de l'avis des propagateurs du nouveau système sur plusieurs points. Je crois comme eux que notre théâtre ~~theatre~~ subira

les changements qu'entraîneront de nouvelles institutions et de nouvelles moeurs; mais je ne puis penser que les auteurs étrangers puissent entrer pour rien dans la lente réforme qui doit avoir lieu. Nous avons pris ces théâtres étrangers tout ce qu'on en peut prendre, et le genre du mélodrame, auquel ils ont donné naissance, les rapproche de celui qu'ils ont exclusivement adopté, qu'il en a toute la bizarrerie, qu'il en produit tous les effets, que l'on voit tous les jours les étrangers s'emparer de ceux de nos mélodrames, qui ont une origine toute française: le Jugement de Salomon, la Pie voleuse, Elodie, etc., etc., ont augmenté le fond de leurs richesses romantiques, et forcent peut-être encore à l'admiration le public de Londres et de Berlin. Il existe donc beaucoup de rapports entre nos théâtres secondaires et les théâtres étrangers; si ce n'est pourtant qu'aux boulevards, la raison forte de notre peuple français ne pourrait souffrir qu'on violât la règle des trois unités, tandis que les partisans du système romantique ne veulent admettre que l'unité d'action. (1)

(1) Duval, Alexandre; Oeuvres, Paris, [illegible], vol. IV, p. [illegible].

Geoffroy failed to distinguish Hamlet from a melodrama; "Hamlet est une tragédie dans le genre des mélodrames; c'est l'horrible mis à la place du pathétique; ce sont toutes les singeries de la sorcellerie et de la terreur ..... Le dénouement est digne du Boulevard .... Cette tragédie anglaise excite toujours le même enthousiasme que le plus extravagant mélodrame du Boulevard. "(1) Almost a hundred years later in the same newspaper for which Geoffroy wrote, we find M. Faguet professing to see in King Lear nothing but affreux, épais mélodrame (2) Shakespeare even when put into classical form by Ducis was not acceptable to Geoffroy who did not find Ducis' adaptation of Hamlet out of place on the Boulevard; "Entre lui et plusieurs pantomimes des Boulevards il y a un air de famille. (3).

(1) Journal des Débats, June 6, 1807.

(2) Propos de théâtre, vol. III, p. 58.

(3) Journal des Débats, April 11, 1803.

Geoffroy and V. Paquet were only stating in different terms the sententious remark of La Harpe, "Shakespeare sacrifie trop à la canaille." The attitude of France toward German drama was the same; Geoffroy saw nothing in German dramatic literature except melodrama.

The popular theaters endeavored to profit by this similarity of their chosen genre and the dramatic masterpieces of England and Germany. The anonymous compiler of the collection entitled, Chefs-d'oeuvre du répertoire des mélodrames contended that the melodramatists had done France a great service by translating and staging foreign plays. "Le théâtre étranger fourmille de pièces qui ont un certain mérite. Si nos auteurs accrédités n'ont pas assez de patience ou de talent pour faire passer leurs beautés sur nos grands théâtres, au moins d'autres auteurs qui annoncent des dispositions, qui d'ailleurs savent distinguer l'or qui parfois brille dans le fumier, pourront, comme la chose est déja arrivée, adapter avec adresse, et discernement, à la scène foraine des sujets qui ne sont nullement à dédaigner. Nous jouirons par là de bornes idées et des tableaux in-

teressans tracés par les muses germanique, russe, hollandaise, chinoise même, s'il le faut, etc. Le mélodrame peut faire fructueusement ces métamorphoses, ou plutôt opérer cette utile importation; il a prouvé par ses succès, jusqu'à ce jour, que son genre est utilement populaire. "(1) Pixérécourt maintained that the melodramatists improved the plays which they translated and gave them a more regular form.(2) Already in 1806 the interest in foreign drama became so great that there was opened on the Boulevard the

(1) Vol. I, p. IV.

(2) "On devrait au contraire leur (les auteurs de mélodrames) savoir gré de transporter sur la scène l'élite des pièces allemandes ou anglaises; ce qu'ils ne font qu'après les avoir améliorées, en leur donnant une forme régulière."
Livre des Cent-et-un. Pixérécourt's article on the melodrama.

Théâtre des Variétés Étrangères which was specially devoted to the production of foreign plays. Geoffroy was dubious as to the advisability of establishing such a theater. The North he held to be a corrupting influence in the matter of the drama. "Mais ceux qui, pour combattre ces grands maîtres par le charme de la nouveauté, ont pris une autre route et se sont jetés dans les extravagances, du théâtre anglais et allemand, ont ruiné la tragédie en émoussant la sensibilité des spectateurs; ils ont voulu courir aux effets, ils en ont produit un bien funeste, la satiété du beau et du bon." (1) Geoffroy, however, was a prophet in the wilderness, for Shakespeare and Schiller and the literatures of their respective countries rapidly grew in favor. The melodramatists paid no attention to these attacks by the critics: everything which came to them from Germany and England was utilized, because their audiences were fond of these romanesque novels and plays from abroad. Text, characters, and plots suffered severely at the

(1) Journal de l'Empire, July 13, 1811.

hands of translators and adapters who were not always guided by a desire for greater regularity. (1) Yet the melodramatists appreciated many of the good qualities of their texts and carefully retained them and they deserve the credit for introducing into France some of the spirit of English and German drama, that freedom of form, that attention to the mise en scène and extension of interest in the plot, which was new to Paris.

(1) Cf. Le Coup de fouet, ou revue de tous les théâtres de Paris, p. 42: "Paraît-il un roman nouveau, une pièce étrangère, non connue en France? vite, ils s'en emparent, brodent une intrigue, aussi invraisemblable, que décousue; copient textuellement les meilleures phrases de l'auteur original, et ils se hâtent de soumettre leurs productions au jugement pour obtenir ce qu'ils appellent la priorité, qu'ils ont soin de faire constater deux mois à l'avance dans le très-plaisant Courier des Spectacles."

Another point to be noticed in the relation of English and German drama to French melodrama is the popularity which the latter enjoyed across the Channel and the Rhine. It was especially annoying to the classical critics to see the success of these popular tragedies in London and Berlin where Racine and Corneille had been failures. Even the strangers in Paris, according to Martainville, cared for nothing except the opera and the melodrama. (1) In 1815 the London correspondent of the Journal des Débats wrote that Caigniez' great success, la Pie voleuse was announced for simultaneous production at two London theaters. A year later a critic in the same newspaper, after harshly criticizing a new melodrama at the Porte Saint-Martin concluded with this remark: "Il aura sans doute l'honneur d'être joué devant la bonne compagnie à Londres qui baîlle aux pièces de Corneille et qui s'endort à celles de Racine. "(2)

(1) Journal de Paris, Nov. 9, 1815.

(2) Journal des Débats, July 19, 1816.

A theatrical almanach for 1809 declared the melodrama to be fit only for the Germans and the English whose own tragedies were inferior to those of the Gaîte and the Ambigu-Comique. (1) Geoffroy showed the difference in the taste of London and Paris when he remarked that Sheridan's translation of Kotzebue's Pizarro was played at one of the most prominent theaters in London, whereas in Paris it could be given only on the Boulevard. (2) Mme de Genlis, the tender-hearted novelist spoke of the English drama as déshonoré par une license effrénée en tout genre, par des puérilités étranges, par des extravagances inconcevables. (3) The critics had spoken in similar terms of the melodrama, so that nothing seemed more natural than the favorable reception which it had received in a country whose own drama was of so low a standard.

(1) Opinion du Parterre, 1809, p. 291.

(2) Journal des Débats, Jan. 14, 1809.

(3) Les Souvenirs de Félicie L *****, Paris, 1813, p. 54.

The most important of these influences from the North was that of England where there had taken place during the latter part of the eighteenth century a strange development in popular literature. In 1764 Walpole startled the English reading public with his Castle of Otranto which began the career of the Gothic romance. Although Smollet in Ferdinand Fathom may be considered a precursor of Walpole, yet it is certainly to the latter that the genre owed its extensive popularity. The Castle of Otranto will always remain in English literature in the same condition as the Celestina in Spanish, an unexplained phenomenon. Just as the Spanish play seems so entirely without the development of the drama in Spain, so Walpole's novel apparently has no place in the evolution of English fiction. Its appearance was so unexpected, its character so different from anything which preceded it that we cannot account for it. Walpole himself was a man who was ridiculed by his contemporaries for his whims in architecture and literature. They laughed at his imitation of a feudal

castle which he built upon his estate at Strawberry Hill and they mocked still more at the Castle of Otranto. Even the novelist himself among his friends seemed to jest about his work. Yet the public read it with avidity, it passed through several editions, and every one confessed secretly to the enjoyment to be found in this weird romance filled with the most impossible characters and situations. The Middle Ages, the supernatural, surprises and mystifications were crowded together and yet with all the unreality and fantastic setting the story found a host of readers. Even the poet Gray wrote to Walpole that no one dared to go to bed in Cambridge after reading his novel. However puerile and commonplace this romanesque fiction appears to-day, it was the source of entirely new sensations to the eighteenth century and began the movement which reached its height in the novels of Scott. As M. Filon has said, Walpole's fiction with all its defects still remains un des plus nobles précurseurs du Romanticisme. (1) Anne Radcliffe fol-

(1) Journal des Débats, 26 août, 1908.

lowed in the path of Walpole and with the Mysteries of Udolpho and the Italian attracted the attention of all England. Her name became so well known and such a guarantee of success that it was unlawfully used many times by publishers and authors who wished to increase the sales of their own works. Clara Reeve wrote her Old English Baron for this reading public grown so thirsty for romantic adventure. Another of these romances, Lewis' Monk was more read than even the Castle of Otranto and its fame spread throughout Europe. Goodwin in Caleb Williams and St. Leon tried to make the genre serve a didactic purpose, Mrs. Shelley in Frankenstein introduced a kind of mysticism and the father of American fiction, Brockden Brown, changed the scene from the old to the new world. Many less important authors joined the ranks and supplied this incredible demand for novels of this type. In the realistic atmosphere of to-day it seems almost impossible to realize how great a hold Walpole and his followers had upon their readers.

The similarity of all these Gothic romances

is almost as striking as that of the early French melo-dramas. It would not require the mind of a Poe to forecast the last chapter after reading the first. After the Castle of Otranto the characters, situations, and even the surprises and mysteries, become so rigidly conventional that the reader's curiosity is never aroused. There are minor differences as for example the apparently supernatural is explained by Anne Radcliffe, whereas Walpole offers no explanation for faces in mirrors, strange noises and ghostly apparitions. Yet, the stories are so much of the same pattern and so lacking in novelty and originality that one or two examples will serve to illustrate them all. A child is kidnapped by pirates and is about to be put to death when the pirate-chief recognizes the child to be his own son. A princess hiding in a cave is attacked by an unknown assailant, who is defeated by a prince in disguise. After the fight it is discovered that the father has been attacking his own daughter. Two women in love with the same man dispute the honor of sacrificing their happiness. Haunted rooms, trap-doors, secret passages are everywhere to be found in

the medieval castles where these events generally take place. The author can always help himself out of a difficulty by the use of storms and ghosts. As for the characters, we are sure to meet with a mild, innocent heroine, a rough heartless villain who persecutes the heroine and who is finally defeated by the hero, the model of virtue and chivalry. The hero often makes his first appearance as a poor, unfortunate man who has lost his title and his estates which in the end, however, he regains. The maiden, seeing him restored to his riches, at once accepts him as a husband. Children frequently make vows to their parents and, when the parents die, the children seem bound forever by these promises, just as in the case of Lucia's vow in I Promessi sposi. There is always some sophistry, however, by which the characters are released from these vows. Sometimes one of the parents is suddenly resurrected to free his child. The servants, who become very prominent because of their loquaciousness and also because of their usefulness in assisting the heroes and heroines out of difficul -

ties, are identical with the mais of the melodrama. The moral tone is even more stilted than in the plays of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique, virtue is always triumphant. The characters are not only moral, but proper to the point of absurdity. When Mrs Radcliffe in Udolpho makes the villain enter the heroine's room at night, she carefully informs the reader that the heroine, as she jumps from the bed in fright, was not in her night clothes because "fortunately Emily had not undressed before retiring for the night." Moral precepts, as in the melodrama, are ever present. The novelist preaches the same bland optimism as the dramatist, the final triumph of virtue and the punishment of vice is absolutely certain even in this world. From these few characteristics we may readily gain an idea of these Gothic romances and easily see how much they had in common with the melodrama. (1)

(1) Cf. Möbius, H.; The Gothic Romance, Leipzig, 1902. Fiske, J. F.; The Tales of Terror, Conservative Review, March, 1900.

These novels would not have had any perceptible effect upon popular literature in France, if there had not been many translations of Walpole and the other authors of this school. Although the Castle of Otranto was published only in 1764, the French translation, entitled le Château d'Otranto, conte gothique had passed through three editions before 1775. Seven of the authentic works of Anne Radcliffe were translated and her Mystères d'Udolphe went through four editions. (1) Lewis' Monk was translated twice in 1797, one entitled le Moine and the other le Jacobin espagnol, and there were two later editions in French 1811 and 1819. Among the imitations of these English novels, Quérard cites six works originally in French which were published under the name of Anne Radcliffe (2). One of these le Tombeau (1799) by Chaussier and Bizet, went through three editions and was translated into Spanish. From these figures we see the popularity of the Gothic

(1) 1797, 1808, 1819, 1827.

(2) Quérard, J. M., la France littéraire, vol. VII, pp. 430-1.

romance in France for long before the more cultivated classes became acquainted with the romantic novel in Hugo and the translations of Scott, the people were devouring Radcliffe and Lewis.

Nothing was more easy than to hold up these novels to ridicule. The critics united in deploring the taste of an age which found enjoyment in them. Geoffroy, although lenient toward the melodrama, could not forgive England for sending such a nonsense across the Channel. "Les Anglais même avant la Révolution, avoient infesté notre littérature de romans noirs et terribles: cette terreur ressemblait à la peur que font aux enfants les contes de sorciers, d'ogres, et de revenans "(1). Geoffroy chided England for sending France these gloomy, terrible fictions exactly at the time when l'Enfer semblait avoir vomi ses habitans parmi nous. The English novel seemed to him too far removed from reality, too romanesque, and the characters véritables héros de mélodrame. (2) Geoffroy's criti-

(1) Journal de l'Empire, July 3, 1813.

(2) " " " Jan. 8, 1813.

cism is typical of this period. Yet in spite of all these attacks the popularity of the novels continued and even as late as 1820 we read in the Journal des Débats that Anne Radcliffe still kept her hold upon the provinces. (1)

The dramatization of these Gothic romances began during the Revolution before the melodrama had attained its final form. (2) At that time there was a certain incongruity between the treatment of the monks and hermits and their popularity on the stage. It also seemed as if the horror and terror of everyday life would have been sufficient without seeking such gloomy and terrible sensations at the theater. Yet in the year 1797, when there had been two translations of the Monk and one each of the Italian of Anne Radcliffe and her Udolpho, Pixérécourt dramatized the Monk and Duval, Udolpho. Pixérécourt's Coline, pièce en quatres actes en prose et à grand spectacle

(1) "Anne Radcliffe, dont le nom seul effraie encore les provinces": Journal des Débats, July 15, 1820.

(2) Cf. p. 36.

was not produced at the Gaîté but in the following year the same theater gave a version by Saint-Aubin and the Théâtre de l'Emulation played an anonymous Noine, comédie en cinq actes mêlée de chants et de pantomimes et imitée du roman anglais. Of this last play the Courrier des Spectacles wrote: "C'est un roman intitulé le Noine et tous les épisodes sont mis en action: aucun des tableaux affreux n'y sont oubliés: la roue sanglante, la scène de la forêt, le caveau de l'abbaye, les tombeaux, les inscriptions, les diables qui enlèvent par les cheveux Ambroise, etc. Le spectacle est horrible; et grâce au goût moderne, il est suivi."(1) In 1797 Duval dramatized Anne Radcliffe's Udolpho and in the introduction to the play, which he entitled Yorton , gave an interesting account of how he happened to select that particular novel. Schiller's Raüber had just made a great success in Paris and the actor who had played the leading role asked Duval to write another drama in the same style as that of Schiller. "Ne trouvant

(1) An VIII, p. 176.

rien qui put approcher de mon projet, lorsque le hasard me fit tomber dans les mains les Mystères d'Udolphe de Madame Radcliffe. Quelle fut ma joie de retrouver réuni dans un seul roman un assortiment complet de portes secrètes, de musique aérienne, de revenants, de tours du Nord, enfin tout ce qui peut compléter le grand, le beau, le merveilleux. Riche de tous ces tours de passe-passe que renferme le roman, il ne me restait plus qu'à disposer ma fable d'une manière vraisemblable, qu'à donner de la générosité et des remords à mes bandits, et finir, comme cela se pratique, par faire triompher l'innocence persécutée. Une fois engagé dans les souterrains de mon Château d'Udolphe, je ne voulus pas revenir sur mes pas, , et pour en sortir, je parvins à arranger assez passablement tout ce fatras romanesque. Cependant je dois convenir que, tout en riant moi-même de la puérilité de mes combinaisons, j'aperçus dans le personnage de Montoni, un caractère bien fait, et qui pouvait avoir quelques succès dans le genre terrible. En donnant plus de développement

au rôle secondaire d'Orsino, et en ajoutant de mon propre fonds quelques autres merveilleuses horreurs, je fis de tout cela un énorme monstre dramatique qui aurait pu me faire en Allemagne une certaine réputation. "(1) Although Duval here belittled his own play, he had to confess that it was still being played in the provinces in 1822, when he published a complete edition of his works and also that it was one of the most successful of all his dramas. The critic Hoffman, who later wrote for the Journal des Débats, had in his youth yielded to the popular taste in his two comic operas, le Brigand (1795) and Léon, ou le château de Monténéro (an VII). The latter, which was based upon Udolpho, exemplified all of the characteristics of this romanesque melodrama. The author himself felt it necessary to distribute in the theater on the night of the first performance a pamphlet in which he asked the indulgence of the critics and re-

(1) Duval, Alexandre, Oeuvres complètes, Paris, 1822: vol. II, p. 391.

ferred to the tastes of the age. (1) Pixérécourt also dramatized Udolpho in his Château des Apennins, ou les mystères d'Udolpho, which was played at the Ambigu-Comique in 1798. All of these dramas are nothing more than romans dialogués, the tricks of the novelist are utilized by the dramatist; there are the same mystifications, terror, happy ending and moral lessons. The people who were in the midst of the Revolution welcomed the firm trust in Providence and optimism with which these plays ended. Léon closed with the following verse sung by a choir:

"N'en jugeons pas sur l'apparence
Ici tout est illusion;
La bonne ou mauvaise action
A tôt ou tard sa recompense. "(2)

(1) Hoffman, F. B., Oeuvres, Paris, 1829, vol. II, p. 229, Reponse par anticipation aux journalistes qui doivent déchirer mon ouvrage.

(2) Hoffman, F. B.; Oeuvres, vol. II, p. 318.

In Montoni the audience received the same lesson:"Il est donc vrai que l'injustice ne peut avoir de long succès; les méchants se détruisent entre eux et la vertu, même sans combattre, peut toujours espérer de triompher du crime." (1) After the Revolution these dramas based upon the novels of Lewis and Radcliffe lost favor with the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique and were parodied in the very theaters where a few years before they had been applauded. (2) Yet the type did not entirely disappear,

(1) Duval, A.; Oeuvres, vol. II, p. 523.

(2) Rodéric et Cunégonde (1805) by Martainville was one of the best known of these parodies. The prologue has an interesting passage in which M. Etoffe, who is objecting to this satire of the romanesque melodrama, illustrates the extent to which he and his family had been influenced by these plays: "Ma famille et moi, nous ne manquons pas un mélodrame et ces pièces font sur nous une si vive impression que je me suis fait faire une robe d' ermite et un habit de chevalier; ma femme n'ose plus descendre à la cave, de peur que je ne l'y ferme à jamais; ma fille rêve toujours qu'on va l'enlever et mes garçons de boutique exécutent les combats avec leur demi-aunes."

for the people still retained a liking for the Gothic castle with its ghosts and surprises, and in 1807 Lewis' Spectre du château was given at the Théâtre des Variétés Etrangères, while in 1821 Charles Nodier and Baron Taylor made a free translation of Mathurin's Bertram, ou le château de St. Aldobrand, which contained all the paraphernalia of a gruesome tragedy. The authors, like Duval, (1) excused themselves by pointing to the demand which the public made upon the dramatist. Again in their preface they admitted that this English play was not without its beauty. (2) As late as 1827 the public welcomed Pixérécourt's Tête de mort, ou les ruines de Pompeïa, a dramatization of Goodwin's weird story, Caleb Williams.

(1) Cf. p. 247.

(2) "Ce qu'il y a de déplorable, c'est que cette tragédie anglaise est horriblement belle, et si l'on peut s'exprimer ainsi, qu'elle est horriblement morale; car on ne peut pas se plaindre que le crime n'y reçoive pas sa punition."

Although the Gothic melodrama did not retain its great popularity after the disappearance of the unsettled condition of the Revolution, it left certain traces , which may be easily discovered in most of the plays on the Boulevard. The English novelists taught the playwrights of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique the various means of holding the attention of the audience. They showed the value of mystifying and surprising the public. The Gothic scenery which had made many of these dramatizations effective remained and the melodramatists never lost an opportunity, especially in their historical plays, of putting on the stage, settings which were reminiscent of le Moine and les Mystères d'Udolpho. The Gothic hall of Don Ruy Gomez and the crypt at Aix-la-chapelle are in the same category as many of the scenes from Caigniez and Pixerécourt.

Two English novels although of an entirely different character from those of Walpole and Lewis, enjoyed such popularity in France that their dramatization for the Boulevard was inevitable. Robinson Crusoe" (1805) gained Pixerécourt much fame. Defoe's hero was

an old friend to the audiences of the popular theaters and he was received on the stage as such. Piccini, who composed the music for the play, has left us an account of the first performance; "J'étais dans la salle le jour de cette première représentation; l'entrée de Robinson avec son costume de peau de chèvre, son parasol surmonté d'un superbe haras vivant, qui criait très-à-propos ce qu'il avait à dire, produisit une satisfaction générale; hommes, femmes, enfants, ce n'était que battements de mains, enthousiasme général."(1) Geoffroy, although he believed Defoe's work unsuited to the theater , commended Pixérécourt for the skillful manner in which he had made the dramatization. The play itself is characteristic of the dramatist; there is his habitual attention to detail in the careful explanations of scenery and costume, and the desire for exactness. As in the case of Christophe Colomb, (2) he quotes the sources from which he obtained descriptions of the war

(1) Pixérécourt, Théâtre choisi, vol. II, p. 171; Lettre d'Alexandre Piccini à M. de Pixérécourt.

(2) Cf. p.109.

dances and other ceremonies of the natives. The end of the story had to be changed to suit the needs of melodrama. In the last act Robinson, who has been discovered by his wife and son, sails away with them but leaves on the island the sailors who had betrayed him and tried to kill him. But like the true hero of melodrama he pardons all and urges them to turn from their wickedness. Another character which appeared on the Boulevard was Dean Swift's traveler but Gulliver could not make as universal an appeal as Robinson and so Gulliver dans l'île des Géans (1815) did not remain very long at the Théâtre des Variétés. These two English novels by their simplicity and lack of the romantic and the fantastic were not in line with the traditions of popular tragedy and the melodramatist naturally turned from them to works more like the Gothic romances.

The full development of the movement which Horace Walpole initiated is found in Walter Scott. In his younger days the author of Ivanhoe had ridiculed Anne Radcliffe but later on he frankly confessed that she

had greatly aided in preparing the way for the histori - al novel. The transition from the Monk and the Mysteries of Udolpho to Guy Mannering and Rob-Roy is most natural. While Scott introduced into the novel erudition and an exact acquaintance with the Middle Ages, he did not essentially change its character. For the uncritical public the interest in the works of Scott is the same as in Walpole and Lewis, and as a proof of this we have the immense popularity of Scott's novels, not only among the educated classes but also among the people who saw dramatisations of his works at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. An appreciation of the English novelist, which was written in 1830, explains his success in France. "Je ne parle pas du roman: l'influence est ici trop directe et l'école trop servile: je parle du théâtre, où c'est devenu la mode de réduire aux pro - positions de la scène le drame historique de Walter Scott .... Le gros public y trouve des aventures, un drame, une péripétie, une catastrophe, le roman pur avec ses vieux moyens d'intérêt, ses surprises, ses douces attentes, ses impatiences. Il y voit le malheureux qui deviennent heureux, des amans qui se marient;

il y suit une action qui se développe, s'emmêle, se dénoue; il y retrouve toutes les émotions du roman français avec de nouveaux visages, des costumes étrangers, des plaids, des claymores; au lieu des petites collations de notre roman, où l'on mange du bout des dents et où l'on soupe d'esprit et de mots délicats, il assiste à de grands repas de famille, etc. "(1) In 1822 the year of the first visit of the English actors to Paris, there were no fewer than three adaptations from Scott. Ducange wrote la Fiancée de Lamermoor, Frédéric, le Château de Kenilworth, and Pixérécourt at the end of the year dramatized some of the episodes of the Abbot in l'Evasion de Marie Stuart, ou le château de Lock-Leven. The last play, which shows much more ability than the ordinary melodrama of Pixérécourt, deals with the exciting escape of the queen and the heroic devotion of Douglas who gives up his life for her. As a matter of fact the drama was so well written and so much above the standard of the Boulevard that it did not succeed as well as the popular dramatization of Ducange and

(1) Journal des Débats, Jan. 6, 1822.

Frédéric. (1) And here we have a remarkable co-incidence which serves to strengthen our belief that Victor Hugo was well acquainted with what happened at the popular theaters. In 1822, when there were three melodramas based upon Scott's novels, Hugo conceived the idea of dramatizing Kenilworth. Alexandre Soumet collaborated with him for the first three acts, then there was a disagreement and each continued separately. Five years later the Comédie Française played Soumet's version entitled Emilia and the Odéon gave Hugo's Amy Robsart, which Paul Foucher reworked and published under his own name. We have only to read the stage-directions for the end of the last act, as Hugo himself wrote them in his original draft of Amy Robsart, in order to see how well the young dramatist knew the tricks of the Boulevard. "Les alambics d'Alasco éclatent. Le feu

(1) Cf. Le Drapeau blanc, Dec. 5, 1822: "Il nous suffira de dire que, si le théâtre où elle a été représentée ne lui avait pas imposé le titre de mélodrame, elle aurait pu s'appeler Drame historique et figurer au Théâtre Français comme Edouard en Ecosse et plusieurs autres ouvrages du même genre."

prend au château. Les deux complices, Alasco et Varney, cernés entre l'incendie et l'abîme ouvert des oubliettes, périssent sous une pluie de feu, tandis que, du haut des solives mi-calcinées, Flibbertigibbet, gymnasiarque émérite, ébauche encore quelques rétablissements et donne la morale de la pièce. "(1) This ending would have been according to the best traditions at the Ambigu-Comique.

Beside Walpole, Lewis, Anne Radcliffe, and Scott, some mention must be made of Shakespeare in connection with the English influences on the melodrama. The greatest of English dramatists had fared badly in the eighteenth century in France as well as in his own country. Voltaire had abused him and described him as le plus misérable buffon, who wrote sans la moindre connaissance des règles and qui n'ait jamais amusé que la populace. Cubières de Palmezeaux raged against the English barbarian in whose plays 'l'on voit des spectres, des revenans, encore couverts du drap mortuaire, venir faire des discours pathetiques aux assistans; où l'on

(1) Glachant, P. et V., op. cit. vol. I, p. 57.

prodigue les échafauds, les cercueils, les potences, les coupes empoisonnées et mille autres ressorts puérils de terreur, qui ne parlent qu'aux yeux et ne disent rien a l'âme (1)". Lemercier also criticized Shakespeare as well as Lope de Vega for the abuse of the supernatural, which could cause astonishment only to the ignorant mind (2). These opinions regarding Shakespeare, were current when the melodrama arose, yet the popular playwrights, knowing his prestige in England and Germany and recognizing that there were a few even in France who were beginning to differ from Voltaire, welcomed these comparisons between their melodramas and the tragedies of Shakespeare. The theaters of the Boulevard should be given due credit for their part in aiding the spread of the English dramatist's fame in France. Ducis had attempted to make Macbeth and Hamlet more

(1) Cubières de Palmezeaux, Oeuvres dramatiques, Paris, 1810; vol. III, p. 13.

(2) Lemercier, N., Remarques sur les bonnes et les mauvaises innovations dramatiques lues à l'Académie Francaise, le mardi 5 avril, 1825.

acceptable to French but at the beginning of the nineteenth century even the staunchest classicist would probably have agreed with Geoffroy when he said, "J'aime mieux Shakespeare nu que garroté par Aristole." The melodramatists prefaced the way for the English players and for the tragedies of Shakespeare by making their audiences fully acquainted with the more material beauties of romantic drama, the elaborate scenery and costumes. The striking climaxes, the mixture of tragedy and comedy and other characteristics of romantic drama were familiar to those who frequented the small theaters of the Boulevard, whose audiences it must be remembered were not wholly composed of the lower classes. When Kemble and Miss Smithson came to the French capital in 1827, they were successful but undoubtedly for the majority of the public there was no distinction made between the plays which these English actors gave and the melodramas on the Boulevard.

In a few instances we have direct imitations of Shakespeare. His plots were made use of for both pantomimes and melodramas. In 1816 the Porte-Saint-Martin made a five-act pantomime out of Hamlet and in 1820 the

same theater turned the Merchant of Venice into a three-act melodrama entitled Shylock. In reading many of these early melodramas we frequently meet characters and situations which might have been imitations of Shakespeare. For example the scene in Robinson Crusoe, where the savages, after covering themselves with leaves and branches, advance upon the enemy like a moving forest, recalls a similar scene in Macbeth but this may be nothing more than co-incidence. The melodramatists in general had no acquaintance with Shakespeare, although they were ready to cite his works as masterpieces which were more irregular than their own plays.

In summing up the relations of English literature to the melodrama, we must place as the most important influence that of the Gothic romance. The many translations of Walpole, Anne Radcliffe, and Lewis furnished the early melodrama with plots and characters, some of which have since remained in popular tragedy. Defoe furnished the plot for one of the most successful plays of Pixérécourt and Shakespeare gave the playwrights of the Boulevard a moral support. The critics

and the conservatives, it should also be remembered, were anxious to draw as many parallels as possible between English drama and the melodrama.

The influence of Germany upon Pixérécourt and Caigniez and the other providers for the Boulevard was of a different character from that of England. While Germany had no novels, like those of Anne Radcliffe, which could be readily turned into popular plays, she did possess several plays which were very successful at the popular theaters and which were imitated. Schiller's Räuber introduced that family of out laws, which was so dear to the hearts of the audiences at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté, and which also found favor at the Comédie-Française after 1830. Several of Kotzebue's works were well received on the Boulevard at the same time that other plays of his were being given at the Odéon and the Comédie-Française. Faust, of course, appeared in a popular version which was as far removed from that of Goethe as Mercier's Tombeaux de Vérone from Roméo and Juliette, yet the managers were careful to make use of Goethe's name in order that

its prestige might help to advertize the play. Duval made a verse-translation of Lessing's Sara Sampson (1) and Pixerécourt acknowledged his indebtedness to Zschocke's Abelino in his l'Homme à trois visages but Lessing and Zschocke had no reputation on the Boulevard to help their plays. Consequently Schiller and Kotzebue are the only two dramatists from Germany who exercised any influence upon the melodrama.

Many of the German plays whose subject and plot might have interested the people of Paris, were impossible for the popular theaters because of their form. Goetz von Berlickingen with its 56 changes of scene presented very material difficulties. The Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté were loath to increase the number of scenes because they depended upon a few well-staged scenes rather than a large number of poor stage-settings. Furthermore many of the German romantic dramas were too prolix, too complicated in plot, and too filled with detail to hold the attention of a

(1) La Courtisane, ou le danger d'un premier choix: Duval, A., Oeuvres, vol. III, p. 59.

popular French audience. Geoffrey found little that was good to say about the dramatic literature of Germany. In a severe adverse criticism of Les Deux frères of Kotzebue, he enumerated some of the faults of German drama in general: "On y trouve les défauts des pièces allemandes, la prolixité, l'emphase, la déclamation, le pédantisme, la prétention au sentiment et à la sensibilité: tous les vices que nos auteurs actuels ont grand soin de prendre aux Allemands: mais ils ne prennent pas les qualités qui excusent ces défauts."(1) Lemercier found nothing to praise in Schiller; Don Carlos was a long historical poem in dialogue, Wallenstein was filled with superfluous details and die Jungfrau von Orlean false and trivial. (2) France was overcome with astonishment when Grillpatzer's Sapho was first given in French; a German tragedy without ghosts, stage-fights, processions, and horses and with strict adherence to the unities seemed to revo-

(1) Journal des Débats, Jan. 29, 1808.

(2) Lemercier, N., Remarques sur les bonnes et les mauvaises innovations dramatiques, 1825.

lutionize (1) the French critics' idea of German drama. Saphe proved to be an exception, and, therefore Paris did not find it necessary to revise its opinion regarding the plays which came from Germany. One of the tragedies of Schiller met with a curious fate; in 1820 Maria Stuart, in Lebrun's translation was applauded at the Comédie-Française but in an anonymous prose version was hissed on the Boulevard. (2) After 1830 Dumas, père, made use of many of Schiller's plots but, during the period covered by this monograph, Schiller's reputation on the Boulevard was due to the fame of Die Räuber. (3)

This revolutionary play of Schiller's youth had made the author a revolutionary hero. In 1792 the Assemblée conferred upon him, together with Washington and Hamilton, the rights of citizenship. His immature drama dealing with Charles Moor and his robber-band could never have succeeded in Paris at

(1) Journal des Débats, June 4, 1818.

(2) Journal des Débats, Aug. 11, 1820.

(3) Cf. Parigot, H., le Drame d'Alexandre Dumas, Paris, 1898; pp. 91-113.

any other period excepting that of the Revolution. Friedel had translated it and published it in le Nouveau théâtre allemand in 1785 but Lamartellière first brought it to the attention of the public. His version, entitled Robert, chef de brigands having been refused at the Comédie-Française he took it to the small theater, known as the Théâtre du Marais, where it was enthusiastically received the 17th of February, 1792. The critics and the press were unanimous in condemning the play. Le Moniteur found it to be un ouvrage monstrueux, sans unité, sans vraisemblance. Good taste and common sense were absent and, if the plot was at all interesting, it was due to the efforts of the translator. (1) Ten years after this first performance two historians of the drama during the Revolution expressed the opinion that Schiller's play had exerted a most pernicious influence. "Nous n'hésitons pas à regarder la représentation de cet ouvrage comme une des causes qui ont détruit dans le peuple tout senti-

(1) Cf. Le Journal des Théâtres, March 16, 1792.

ment d'humanité, et enfin, pour le juger en deux mots, nous sommes persuadés qu'il a poussé une foule d'hommes vers le crime et qu'il n'en a pas ramené un seul dans le sentier de la vertu. "(1) In spite of all these attacks upon the play which appeared after its first performance, it was soon transferred from the Théâtre du Marais to the Rue de Richelieu, where it did not have to pass the scrutin épuratoire in order to obtain a certificat de civisme. George Sand, who saw an amateur performance of the play in 1798, was much impressed and even many years after she wrote: "c'est le système jacobin dans son essence; Robert est un idéal du chef de la montagne, et j'engage mon lecteur à le relire comme un monument très curieux de l'esprit du temps. "(2) Charles Moor, Schiller's romantic hero, was well calculated to fire the imagination at the end of the eighteenth century, he storms the stage and bursts into tirades against the injustice of society. A bandit, an outlaw, although innocent,

(1) Etienne and Martainville, Histoire du Théâtre Français pendant la Révolution.

(2) Histoire de ma vie, vol. I, p. 191.

he calls upon Heaven to right the wrongs of this world. Like the Parisian audiences after 1789, he believes in the possibility of abstract justice. For the Boulevard he typified heroic revolt against tradition and became one of the ideals of the Revolution. Through many performances extending over several years the people remained faithful to this reckless outlaw, and after the withdrawal of the play itself this type of hero became conventional at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté. After the Revolution the nature of the interest somewhat changed and the brigand, no longer representing a political idea, became a romanesque hero, rough and uncouth yet kind-hearted. One of the most popular of the many imitations of Robert, chef de brigands was la Forêt périlleuse, ou les brigands de la Calabre, which Louise de Trégate wrote for the Théâtre de la Cité in 1797. It is a peculiar mixture of rhetoric and revolutionary doctrines. Feminine roles are almost as scarce as in la Mort de Césaŕ. Poor Camille leads a lonely existence in a cave where a half do - zen robbers inveigh against society. The ending is more worthy of a melodrama than that of Robert, chef

de brigand. With the announcement of a general parlay, the hero exclaims: "Venons, chère Camille, et vous, mes dignes amis, sortons de cet horrible lieu, et allons remercier le ciel d'avoir puni le crime et sauvé l'innocence." Another imitation of Schiller may perhaps be found in Hoffmar's Brigand, although the plot bears a certain resemblance to those of the Gothic romances. Pixérécourt evinced a fondness for the robber hero and the exile and other melodramatists also made him their raisonneur. The robber, as the out-law, the political re-actionary began with Schiller, although the simple highwaymar, who steals for the pleasure of it, and who afterwards distributes the booty to the poor, was a familiar figure in the Gothic romance. The audiences wearied of the robber as they did of Anne Radcliffe's fictions and in 1815 we find the Théâtre des Variétés parodying the character in Jocrisse, chef de brigands. Victor Hugo, fifteen years later rehabilitated the out-law and restored him to the exalted position which he had once occupied on the Boulevard.

None of the other plays of Schiller met with success in the popular theaters of Paris. Besides the

failure of Maria Stuart in 1800, which has been mentioned above (1) Jrour et intrigue, a translation of Kabale und Liebe was hissed from beginning to end. (2) Although Lorière's adaptation of Wilhelm Tell had been played at gratuitous performances by order of the Assemblée, yet in 1828 when Pixerécourt made it over into a melodrama, it failed to impress the public.

Kotzebue, the other German dramatist who became known on the Boulevard, possessed much more technical skill than Schiller. His plays, while lacking the poetry and serious purpose of Schiller's dramas, were filled with interest, brillant climaxes, and much pathos and therefore were successful at the popular theaters. In 1789 Weiss and Jaffret had published

(1) p. 243.

(2) Cf. le Journal de Paris, 27 nivose, an IX:

"Elle est tellement éloignee de nos moeurs et si maladroitement conçue, qu'on n'osera pas sans doute l'offrir une seconde fois à l'indulgence du public "

translations of his better-known works. In 1791 le Club Jacobin increased his reputation in Paris as did la Gageure dangereuse (1798) but Misanthropie et repentir (1799) made him one of the most popular dramatists of the period. There is nothing new in the plot of Menschenhass und Reue: a wife yields to the advances of a friend who is watching over her during her husband's absence, she quickly repents, abandons her home and passes three years in silence and poverty and then is pardoned after a full confession. Yet the situations in this common-place plot are skillfully handled and the pity for the erring wife was so cleverly aroused that Paris greeted the drama as a novelty. "Aucune femme n'en sortait sans avoir trempé de ses larmes une demi-douzaine de mouchoirs. (1) Never before had the city witnessed such a comédie larmoyante. The Boulevard, however, was not responsible for the first performance of this tearful drama. Fauvelet de Bourrienne, one of Napoleon's secretaries, first translated it in 1798 under the title of l'Inconnu but could not find a theater to produce it and another

translation by Rigaud was deemed unfitted for the French stage by the sociétaires of the Comédie-Française. In 1799 a sister of Molé, the actor, succeeded in having her translation of Kotzebue's play produced at the Odéon and the theater across the Seine, which was as usual in financial difficulties, was soon in a better condition than it had been for a long time.

This great success of Misanthropie et repentir, just at the beginning of the melodrama was not unnoticed by Pixérécourt and Caigniez. The audiences of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté, who were in a state of hysteria at the close of the Revolution, were extremely sentimental and fond of shedding tears, the abuse of pathos became characteristic of the melodrama and we have already seen how cripples, the blind, deaf mutes and children figured prominently on the popular stage for the purpose of touching the tender hearts of the audience. The melodrama of to-day still retains an abundance of pathetic characters and situations. Before the Revolution there had been nothing but laughter and farce at the théâtre de la foire, although in Arnould's pantomime there is

a beginning of the sentimental. Tears were not natural to the populace of Paris, yet the skill of Kotzebue and the melodramatists who imitated him was sufficient to make exaggerated sentiment popular. England, as well as France, had come under the power of this author and produced several of his plays which, after being successful in London,were translated from English into French and played in Paris. Les Malheurs de la famille (1801) was from the English version instead of the original German and a free translation of Sheridan's arrangement of Pizarro was played in Paris in 1804.

Kotzebue himself came to Paris in 1804, seeking consolation for the death of his wife and also looking for new ideas regarding the drama. He was received with honor by the popular playwrights. Duval arranged his Hussites, ou le siège de Naumbourg in the form of a three-act melodrama in the same year. Duval who had made Kotzebue's acquaintance in Germany confessed that he had been moved to tears at a performance of the play in German, although he could under-

stand nothing more than the pantomime of the actors.(1) Kotzebue's account of his sojourn in the French capital was translated by Pixérécourt in 1805 under the title of Souvenirs de Paris en 1804. Apparently Kotzebue took away too many ideas for both Alexandre Duval and the critics of the German newspaper accused him of claiming as original work translations of French plays.(2) This plagiarism on the part of Kotzebue seems the more remarkable, when it is recalled that as early as 1781 the German dramatist was thrilling his audiences, when the popular theaters of Paris were still playing pantomime. Although Germany and England had possessed a popular drama long before France, the French playwrights of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique exhibited, almost from the beginning, a technical skill, an ability

(1) Duval, A ., Oeuvres, vol. V, p. 207.

(2) Duval, A ., vol. I, p. 211. Pixérécourt showed a marked contrast to Kotzebue to whom he acknowledged indebtedness even for a single scene in les Maures d'Espagne, ou le pouvoir de l'enfance (1804)

to write bright dialogue and to plan effective climaxes, which at once carried their names and their works abroad. Most of the successful melodramas of Paris were immediately translated and played in London and Berlin. The melodramatists showed the same admirable dramatic sense which before and since their time has always distinguished French drama in general.

The southern part of Europe, Spain and Italy, had no influence upon Pixerécourt and his followers. The romantic school, although it found some of its literary ideas in the North constantly placed its heroes and heroines in highly colored Spain and Italy. Both of these southern countries offered in their legends and their history countless subjects suited to popular drama. Spain and Italy, however, had no modern literature of a purely popular character such as the Gothic romances of England and the plays of Schiller and Kotzebue. In order to make use of the material which Spain and Italy offered, the melodramatists would have found it necessary to spend more time and labor than they were accustomed to upon their adaptations from the German and the English. A few

stories and plays based upon Spanish and Italian works did, however, appear on the Boulevard. La Forêt de Senart, an anonymous dramatization of the episode of Velasquez and his unworthy son in Gil Blas, was given as an incident in Spanish rather than French life. Although the Journal des Débats claimed that there were no less than sixty melodramas in Lesage's novel, if the melodramatists only had the time to read it, no other episodes in the book were used as plots. Even Calderon was brought down to the level of the Ambigu-Comique in Charrin's le Rapt, ou amour, honneur, et devoir, mélodrame en trois actes imité du théâtre espagnol de Calderon which was given at that theater in 1815. Pixerécourt's dramatization of Florian's Gonzalve de Cordoue, entitled les Maures d'Espagne had a peninsular setting. From Italy there was also very little. One of Pixérécourt's earliest play was a translation of Frédéric but altho the Theâtre de la Cité accepted le Coffre de fer, ou le juge de son crime in 1797, it never produced the play. Pixérécourt's Homme à trois visages, ou le proscrit de Venise (1801), which deals with the history of Venice during the sixteenth

century, was not originally from the Italian but a translation from the German original of Zschocke. In 1820 Caigniez and Villier took a well-known incident in Italian history for their mimodrame (1) entitled Ugolino, ou la tourde la faim. Beyond these few plays there is scarcely any mention of Spain and Italy, or any use made of their literature or history.

The very slight influence which foreign literature in general exerted upon early melodrama proves conclusively that it was essentially a native growth. Although it received suggestions from abroad, it never became anything more than the expression of the ideals of the humble classes of Paris and of France. Within a very few years after its origin, it freed itself from the influence of the Gothic romance, which at one time seemed to have taken a firm hold upon it. Before the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, it had grown independent and national, and, instead of borrowing from abroad,

(1) An unsuccessful form of popular drama in which a part of the actors used pantomime only. Cf. p.276.

it was beginning to furnish even the better class of theaters in London and Berlin with popular, but well-written, plays, which were quite as successful there as in Paris. The scanty education and unfamiliarity with foreign languages among the melodramatists prevented them from knowing very much about foreign literatures. Had the melodramatists been better acquainted with English drama, they might have found English tragedies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which could easily have been turned into tolerable melodramas. A few alterations and a happy ending is all that would have been necessary. Although Pixerécourt and his fellow playwrights borrowed little, they quite justified themselves, because the foreign ideas and material were hardly recognized as such. The audiences of the boulevard were too chauvinistic to applaud German or English drama. Since the exclusion of all that is foreign in the works of Pixerécourt and Caigniez would make very little change in the history of the early melodrama, we cannot ascribe to the literature of England and Germany any considerable influence on the popular tragedy of France.

Chapter IV.

The authors, the Actors, and the Theaters of the Melodrama.

In discussing the origin and the structure of the melodrama, it has been necessary to make frequent mention of the more prominent playwrights who excelled in this genre. Among the many authors who wrote for the Boulevard, there were three, Pixérécourt, Caigniez, and Cuvelier, who stood out more clearly than the others because of their ability and their influence. Yet these authors were far too good dramatists to become subjective and consequently there are no peculiarities of style or treatment of plot which differentiate one from another. Both their choice of subjects and their attitude toward the melodrama is almost the same.

The discussion of these authors and their characteristics will naturally lead to a consideration

of the actors, who were carefully trained by the playwrights and who through this training, were able to introduce a new school of acting into France. These versatile dramatists also became managers and owners of some of the popular theaters, whose history is so closely connected with that of the melodrama. Two of these theaters, the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique, where the large majority of the plays hitherto mentioned were given, have been considered the home of the melodrama and their history furnishes some interesting and important details concerning the development of popular tragedy.

The number of melodramatists from 1800 to 1830 is exceedingly large. Besides men, like Pixérécourt and Caigniez, who devoted their entire time to the composition of melodramas, there were dramatists better known at the Comédie-Française than on the Boulevard, who did not disdain the applause so easily won at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté. Amateur authors, fearing the refusal of their plays by the sociétaires of the Théâtre-Français made a few changes in their manuscripts and then offered them to a manager on the Boulevard. Alexandre Duval, whose Edouard en Ecosse frightened the classicists when given at the first theater of France in 1814, began his career at the popular theaters. His Monteni (1797) and

Guillaume le conquérant (1803), the first a Gothic melodrama and the second an historical play, quite on a level with the average work of the Boulevard. The genial Charles Nodier, a close friend of Pixérécourt and an apologist of popular tragedy, tried his hand at two plays in this genre so despised by his literary friends. Le Monstre et le magicien (1826) and le Vampire (1820) are evidences of the versatility of the author of Trilby. Baron Taylor also consented to write for the people typical melodrama such as Bertram, ou le pirate (1823), Ali Pasha (1820) les Serfs de la Scandinavie (1806) and la Mort du chevalier (1823). Baron Taylor and Charles Nodier collaborated with Dupetit-Méré in le Délateur par vertu (1821) which in spite of the efforts of its authors failed to please the Boulevard. In 1821 Nodier and Baron Taylor translated Maturin's Bertram, ou le château de Saint Aldobrand which was a melodrama in everything except the name. Although the translators professed that their intention was to carry out the ideas of Lemercier and naturalize le génie romantique de la muse anglaise, dans le drame, they feared lest they be classed among les auteurs ivres dérèglés, les auteurs de mélodrames, par exemple!

Scribe also supplied the Boulevard with two melodramas, Les Frères invisibles (1819) and Guillaume, ou les Tartares (1813). Lamartellière, after translating Schiller's Brutus, wrote two typical popular tragedies, la Orcite d' Inverness (1805) and les Frances Juges 1807. Undoubtedly there were other authors of literary rank besides Duval, Nodier, Taylor, Scribe and Lamartellière who attempted to write melodramas but these were the only ones who acknowledged their own plays. Many melodramas were anonymous, while others were signed by a pseudonym. Dupetit Méré, who had won a reputation on the Boulevard because of the success of his Vallée du torrent(1816), Fils banni(1819), and Château de Kenilworth (1822), was always known at the popular theaters as Frederic. Being the manager of the Odéon, he may have found it advisable to conceal his name, when writing for the amusement of the folk. Hapdé, the author of l'Enfant prodigue (1803), Frédérilie, ou le démon familier (1798), Le Bois en une heure, ou l'exposé des faits (1819), and many other successful melodramas, wrote all his plays under the name of Augustin et Augustin. The fever for dramatic composition was so contagious on the Boulevard that even the actors became authors. Frederic Lemaître, the famous romantic actor who began his career in melodrama, wrote

le Chasseur noir (1828) and le Vieil artiste ou la séduction (1826). Even animal trainers, like the Franconi brothers, whose circus-theater was so well known on the Boulevard, turned authors and wrote for their own theater le Soldat laboureur (1819) and le Chien du régiment. (1828).

This large number of melodramatists drawn from various classes of society shows that the Gaîté and the Ambigu Comique were familiar to all Paris. From the librarian of the Arsenal to the amateur authors who did not dare to sign their names to their plays there was a fondness for producing these popular tragedies with their rant and their puerile unreality. Some of the romanticists jested and cried with Musset, Vive le mélodrame où Margot a pleuré. Bouchardy was often rebuked in the last cénacle by Gautier and his friends for his bad French in le Sonneur de Saint Paul. Yet while Margot was weeping and Bouchardy was being ridiculed for his extravagant plays, the romanticists were profiting by the experiments on the Boulevard and were evolving plans for a regeneration of national drama.

Of this large number of the melodramatists, it will be necessary to discuss only the three, Guilbert de Pixérécourt, L. C. Caigniez, and J. G. A. Cuvelier. The many other popular playwrights have no especial interest for us, because they only followed these leaders.

Pixérécourt is rightly considered the representative mélodramatist. He himself, claimed to be the originator and the chief exponent of popular tragedy from the end of the Revolution until 1830 and his contemporaries agreed with him. Geoffroy bestowed upon him the title of reine du mélodrame. During his lifetime he was spoken of as le Corneille du mélodrame, le Voltaire du mélodrame, le roi du mélodrame, le père du mélodrame. His career on the Boulevard began with Victor, ou l'enfant de la forêt (1797) and ended with Latude, ou trente cinq ans de captivité (1834).

(1) He was born in Nancy in 1775 and came to Paris during the Revolution. He was determined to realize his ambition of becoming a playwright and, while waiting for

(1) Mr. Saintsbury is quite mistaken in his Short History of French Literature, p. 545, when he says that Pixérécourt's first success was in 1814 with le Chien de Montargis.

the unappreciative managers to recognize his talent, painted fans to keep body and soul together. In the list of plays which he placed at the beginning of his Théâtre choisi, thirteen of the first fifteen are marked non représenté or non reçu. In 1827, he became manager of the Opéra Comique, in 1833 he leased the Gaîté and after the destruction of this theater in 1835, he retired to Nancy where he died in 1844. From 1841 to 1843 he published the best of his plays in four volumes under the title of Théâtre choisi. In this collection he also included two chapters of his autobiography, Souvenirs du jeune âge et détails sur ma vie (1) and Souvenirs de la Révolution (2) In his Théâtre choisi he reprinted only a fifth of his 129 plays.

(1) Vol. I, p XVII.

(2) Vol. II, p. I. Cf. also Marsan J. le Mélodrame et Guilbert de Pixérécourt, Revue d'histoire littéraire de France, vol. VII, p. 196.

Pixérécourt's first melodramas, such as le Noir, ou la victime de l'orgueil (1797) and le Château des Apennins ou les Mystères d'Udolphe (1797) were based upon Gothic romances. Then he turned to the popular fiction of his own country, where he found sufficient material to occupy him for several years. Coelina, ou l'enfant du mystère (1800), le Pélerin blanc, ou les orphelins au hameau, (1801), and la Femme à deux maris (1802) were all drawn from the novels of Ducray-Duminil and Pigault-Lebrun. Having not yet found his proper field in either of these two types of melodrama, he began to use historical plots, which he soon discovered to be the most successful. La Forteresse du Danube (1805), les Ruines de Babylone, (1810), le Chien de Montargis (1814), Charles le Temeraire, ou le siège de Nancy (1814), Christophe Colomb, ou la découverte du nouveau monde (1815) and Latude (1834) are among the best of his historical plays. He always evinced a strong inclination for the grandiose and the heroic, and, when others successfully introduced plots based upon popular tradition and brought in the reign of domestic melodrama, he refused to follow their example.

Pixérécourt's style is not distinguished from that of the average popular playwright of his time, Caigniez certainly wrote much better and Cuvelier much worse, but after all there is little choice. Pixérécourt recognized the importance of the scenery and the acting, and realized that his time was better expended in supervising the rehearsals than polishing his style. Like Hardy, Molière and Shakespeare, he was theatrical director and stage-manager as well as author. He insisted upon the necessity of the dramatist being present at rehearsals "pour châtier son style (théâtralement parlant) et pour faire la guerre aux mots." (1) Half of his success he attributed to the care which he bestowed upon the stage settings and the training of the actors. (2) But if he neglected his rhetoric, while performing the duties of stage-manager, he never failed to insert in his plays a tirade in the style noble du Boulevard. He understood his audiences and was able to hold them

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, p. 494 ; Dernières réflexions de l'auteur sur le mélodrame.

(2) Op. cit., vol. II, p. 496.

with his apostrophes to justice and honor. His tendency toward the ideal and the heroic led Geoffroy to call him the Corneille of the Boulevard, a title which the friends of the melodramatist jealously guarded for him. In simple dialogue he excelled, although the standard on the Boulevard was high. His characters display no wit but speak naturally. The irrelevant is carefully avoided. Rodier found it difficult to defend Pixérécourt's style yet he believed it much better than it was generally supposed to be. "Je ne rappellerai pas que, dans d'excellentes scènes de Tékéli et de vingt autres pièces, il a fait preuve d'un admirable talent d'élocution et de dialogue." (1) Yet even the bombast and exaggeration of Pixérécourt's style and that of the melodramatists in general could be excused and might even be proved to be of some advantage because the people understood and appreciated this language of popular tragedy.

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. I., p. X.

Naturally there is little depth in the drama of Pixérécourt. The abtruse and the recondite would have been out of place at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. Any psychological analysis of character, which would have impeded the action is wholly absent. With the possible exception of Valentine (1821), the plot is concerned with the external world and its influence upon the hero. There is no mental or moral struggle ; the characters are entirely in the hands of Fate and they have an unshaken trust in a Providence which will eliminate all difficulties. The personages of Pixérécourt differ very slightly one from another ; in fact there are only two classes in all his plays, the good people and the bad and both classes have the same fault of being excessive. However unskillfully he may put forward his lesson in any of his plays, his nobility of purpose always lends an atmosphere of seriousness. His sincere belief in the moral mission of the melodrama prevented him from resorting too frequently to certain expedients which were often abused at the popular theaters. The marvellous appears much less in his works than in the average play of his rivals. After his early experiments

in Gothic melodrama, he kept close to a semblance of reality and avoided the supernatural. This was so characteristic of Pixérécourt that the newspapers commented upon it. "L'ouvrage a peut-être aujourd'hui le défaut d'être trop raisonnable et trop sage et de ne pas étonner l'imagination par des événemens assez merveilleux." (1) He also avoided an excessive use of farce. Only once did he completely ignore the traditions of the foire and banish the comic element from a melodrama, As has been mentioned, he believed the comparative failure of les Maures d'Espagne, ou le pouvoir de l'enfance (1804) was due to its uninterrupted seriousness.(2) In spite of this failure which convinced him that the folk insisted upon some buffoonery, he endeavored to limit the intrusion of comedy into the melodrama. Caigniez and Cuvelier both were much freer in this respect but Pixérécourt, because of his desire to instruct the people,

(1) Journal de l'Empire, March 10, 1810.

(2) Cf p. 132.

was reluctant to offer them pure amusement devoid of any moral significance.

Beyond these minor characteristics there is nothing in Pixérécourt's play which distinguishes him from Caigniez, Duvelier and a score of other dramatists of his time. Since his contemporaries had bestowed upon him the title of 'king of the melodrama', he felt that the duty of defending the genre devolved upon him. The attitude which he assumed toward the other authors of the Boulevard was haughty and disdainful. His articles upon the melodrama leave the reader to suppose that he himself was the only dramatist whose works were representative examples of popular tragedy. Even the best of the other dramatists are scarcely mentioned by him and their importance in the development of the drama is unnoticed. After 1830 young, or unknown authors, wishing to profit by the prestige of his name, induced Pixérécourt to collaborate with them. The idea of joint authorship was distasteful to him and while at the beginning of his Théâtre-Choisi he claimed all the thirty-five plays of which he was collaborator, he reprinted none of these plays and omitted to give the names of the other dramatists.

All these dramas, written en société, as he expressed it, were succès pâles. "Ce n'est plus un seul jet, tout est en désaccord." (1) The latter part of his life found him jealous and pessimistic. The theater had become to him a métier difficile et scabreux. (2) The mercenary motives and the the lack of technical skill on the part of a large number of his younger rivals was causing the ruination of genuine popular tragedy. Les Dernières réflexions de l'auteur sur le mélodrame (3) which he appended to the last volume of his works, contained words of reproach and advice to those who were to follow him. His faith in his superiority and leadership was unshaken but he saw no future for the melodrama. "J'ai vu, pendant plus de trente ans, toute la France accourir aux représentations multipliées de mes ouvrages. Hommes, femmes, enfants, riches et pauvres, tous venaient rire et pleurer aux mélodrames bien faits. Hélas !

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, p., 407.

(2) " " vol. IV, p. 404, Cf. Vol. I, p. 11; De toutes les parties de la littérature, la plus scabreuse est sans doute l'art dramatique."

(3) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, pp 493-499.

ce temps est passé. Le théâtre est changé pour toujours. Grâce au progrès, on a privé la société d'un grand plaisir bien innocent et que l'on ne trouvera plus. Tous les estomacs ne peuvent pas supporter l'acide sulfurique."(1) The success of Latude in 1834 was convincing to him at least, that the audiences of the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique were still as ready to applaud what was good and noble as in the earlier days, when Les Ruines de Babylone (1816) and le Chien de Montargis (1814), were holding the attention of the Boulevard and the provinces as well. Nothing could have been simpler than the course which he advised his successors to follow. "Pourquoi donc les auteurs d'aujourd'hui ne font-ils pas comme moi ? pourquoi leurs pièces ne ressemblent-elles pas aux miennes ? C'est qu'ils n'ont rien de semblable à moi, ni les idées, ni le dialogue, ni la manière de faire un plan : c'est qu'ils n'ont ni mon coeur, ni ma sensibilité, ni ma conscience." This was written in 1843 just before his death. He had

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, p. 498.

grew somewhat bitter and angry with the theatre in general and with the dramatists. The destruction of the Gaîté by fire in 1835 had ruined him financially and then the melodrama, in spite of the success of Latude seemed to be following Ducange rather than him. With Jo Ars, ou la vie d'un joueur (1830) Ducange ushered in domestic melodrama, in which the heroic element was entirely lacking and the picture of vice, although ostensibly presented for a moral purpose, were too attractive. Pixérécourt refused to recognize any change in his former audiences. He blamed the melodramatists and not the people for the deterioration of the melodrama.

In contrast to this disdainful attitude which he showed his rivals, was his servile reference to his more literary contemporaries. The four volumes of his Théâtre choisi teem with the names of prominent authors of the period. The general introduction written by Charles Nodier is filled with kindly appreciation of Pixérécourt and praise of his high moral purpose. The famous bibliographer, Paul Lacroix, wrote a short preface for the first play, Coelina. After these two men, we meet a large number of well known literary men who complied with Pixérécourt's request for a preface to one of his plays. Emile

Deschamps, Picard, Duvicsier, de Marchangy, Constant Berrier, and Pongerville all contributed letters, praising the dramatist and his work in popular tragedy. From among the musicians of the period are letters of Piccinni, Delayrac, and Meyerbeer, The flattering titles and epithets which these obliging friends bestowed upon him must have caused him much satisfaction. Paul Lacroix hailed him as créateur d'un genre (1) and insisted that he considered the publication of his plays as a duty which he owed to posterity. Marchangy spoke of votre cousin germain Shakespeare (2) and the kind-hearted Picard, who always showed such a generous disposition toward his fellow dramatists, assured him that he deserved to become a member of the Academy because of his devotion to the cause of uplifting the people,(3) Delayrac warned him against the large theaters , the Comédie-Française;

(1) Op. cit., vol. I, p. 3.
(2) " , vol. III, p. 407.
(3) " , vol. II, p. 76. "Je l'ai dit souvent ; l'Académie te doit une place pour ta fidélité et ta persévérance à rendre le peuple meilleur. Ce ne sont pas quelques vers de plus ou de moins qui donnent des droits exclusifs au fauteuil ; tout ce qui bien doit être considéré comme tel, que ce soit en vers ou en prose, il n'importe. tous les genres sont bons quand leur but est utile."

and the Odéon (1) Raynouard, author of Les Templiers on the other hand, urged him to write something for the Comédie-Française in order to be able to present his candidacy to the Academy. "Sedaine fut de l'Académie française il ne lui restait qu'à vous y arriver ; mais au préalable, il faudrait, comme lui, légitimer vos bâtards." (2) Pixérécourt was tempted to follow this flattering advice and in 1815 read before the société a one-act comedy in verse entitled une Visite de Mme de la Vallière, ou la disgrâce de Bensérade. It was received by a unanimous vote and Mlle. Mars sent him a gracious note accepting the title role. But Pixérécourt, so accustomed to the noisy enthusiastic applause of the Boulevard

(1) Théâtre choisi, vol. II, p. 76.

(2) " " , vol. III., p. 405.

feared the critical audiences of the Comédie Française and withdrew his play before it was produced. (1) He had never met with failure on the Boulevard and consequently did not care to risk his reputation as a dramatist. While his rivals had never come as near the Comédie-Française as he had, they would have been only too ready to ridicule his failure there. Association with his literary friends made him ambitious. He could not resist the temptation of inserting into the Théâtre choisi some chapters of autobiography. In the first volume were his Souvenirs du jeune âge, in the second Souvenirs de la Révolution, in the fourth Esquisses et fragments de voyage. In 1805 he translated Petzebue's Souvenir

(1) In the list of his plays at the beginning of the first volume of his works under the title of this comedy is the following note ; "Reçue au Théâtre Francais , le 2 août 1718. Quoique la réception eût été unanime et très flatteuse pour l'auteur, il n'a jamais voulu faire jouer cette pièce de peur que la représentation n'obtînt pas à son gré un succès pareil à ceux qu'il avait coutume d'obtenir depuis vingt ans."

de Paris en 1804 and afterwards wrote a short biography of his friend, the musician Delayrac. He was also known in Paris as a book-collector. After having brought together a large library especially rich in the drama he was compelled to sell it, when he lost all his small fortune in the destruction of the Gaîté in 1835. (1) The devise on his book plate, un livre est un ami qui ne change pas, is still associated with his name.

Besides this literary ambition of Pixérécourt there is another marked difference between him and the other popular playwrights, his serious attitude toward the melodrama. As M. Faguet has already pointed out, that 'air de sincérité, d'honnêteté, de moralité, d'ingénuité, et de candeur qui est distinctif de toutes les oeuvres de Pixérécourt' (2) differentiates his plays from those of Caigniez and Cuvelier. Other melodramatists wrote mélodrames comiques and parodied their own plays but

(1) Paul Lacroix published an extensive catalogue which was distributed before the sale of the library. The important section containing plays of the Revolution was bought by the Sénat and is now in the Bibliothèque du Sénat.
(2) Faguet, E., Propos de théâtre, vol. II, p. 212.

Pixérécourt believed it a crime to hold up to ridicule a form of entertainment which had such an important rôle to play in the education of the masses. When Le Traité du mélodrame was published in 1817, he wrote a pamphlet entitled Guerre au mélodrame, which was intended as a defense of the genre. Le Traité du mélodrame had spoken of Pixérécourt in a ridiculous manner. "C'est le Rubens du mélodrame. Au lieu du merveilleux de l'épopée, il a planté au Boulevard le cèdre du mystère. On dirait un sapin, un aigle, un mont sourd illuminé." Caigniez and Cuvelier had fared almost as badly, but did not think of replying. Pixérécourt, however, became the champion of melodrama and wrote the best argument which had yet been made in favor of popular tragedy. He claimed no artistic merit for the genre, although he pointed to the fact that the style compared favorably with that of Sedaine and that in the best melodramas the rule of the unities was observed. The merit of melodrama according to him consisted in its being suited to the needs of the lower classes. He could hardly believe that, as soon as an adequate form of popular tragedy had developed, the educated classes should wish to prohibit it. It was useless to try to force the audiences of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté to go to the Comédie-Française, or to be content with pantomimes, parades and vaudevilles. One should be

thankful that the indecency of the last two years had begun to disappear with the rise of the melodrama. To abolish popular tragedy would be to restrict the liberty of the people. "Que m'importe qu'une oeuvre dramatique soit intitulée Comédie, Drame lyrique ou Mélodrame, si l'on n'y trouve rien de contraire à la morale ? Quant à la politique la censure est chargée d'y veiller. De quel droit prétendroit-on m'imposer l'obligation de ne m'amuser que de telle ou telle chose, souvent ennuyeuse ? Si j'aime à être ému, attendri, si je suis flatté de voir les décorations bien peintes, des costumes exacts et frais, des ballets agréables et bien dessinés réunis à une action à peu près raisonnable écrite dans un style naturel, exécutée par des acteurs qui font tous leurs efforts pour me plaire, et tout cela moyennant un prix médiocre qui me permet de procurer de tems en tems ce plaisir à ma famille. (1) He considered it unjust that he should be compelled to pay a high price for a seat at the Comédie-Française, in order to see the

(1) Paris, ou le livre des cent et un, vol. VI. p. 117. article on the melodrama by Pixerécourt.

classical masterpiece. Even the faults of the melodrama should be excused because of its morality. Nigh-cousness and honor, which had been driven from the other theaters had taken refuge in those of the Boulevard. He naively related the difficulties of a père de famille or a pari prudent, who, wishing to take his family to the theater, had to go to the Boulevard, because elsewhere there was nothing but immorality. Unfortunately Pixérécourt was too much hurt by these attacks of the satirists to appreciate much of their innocent humor and to make a reply in the same tantering manner. This satire was probably more intended for amusement than for attacking Pixérécourt.

In 1832 he again took up the defense of the melodrama in an article upon the subject in Paris, ou le livre des Cent-et-un. After stating many of his opinions already expressed in Guerre au mélodrame he advanced the theory that popular tragedy served the purpose of improving the language of the people. Such an argument seems somewhat forced, when we recall that many of the characters frequently used a patois. Furthermore it is very doubtful whether the people were in the habit of reading plays, as he claimed in the following passage : "Le mélodrame a épuré le langage du peuple qui, après l'avoir vu

jouer, le loue, moyennant deux sous, et le lit jusqu'à ce qu'il le sache par coeur." (1) Again in 1841 he took up the question of popular tragedy in Dernières réflexions de l'auteur sur le mélodrame but added nothing to what he had already said.

This earnestness and sincerity, this eagerness to defend the melodrama and to make it serve some other purpose than that of amusement, gives Pixérécourt the right to be called father of the melodrama. In his own time his reputation was increased by his acquaintance with literary men, whereas the other melodramatists were only known to the audiences of the Boulevard and hence did not become as celebrated. Recently Pixérécourt's importance has been over emphasized to the extent of making him more prominent than any of the other popular dramatists. He cannot be considered as the creator of the melodrama because he found it already in existence when he arrived in Paris. As a playwright he showed no greater skill than Caigniez, Cuvelier and several others. His plays to-day are more read than those of his contemporaries but solely because he was the only one to publish a collection of his works. Many of the melodramas, which existed

only in pamphlet form at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal are quite equal in every respect to those of Pixérécourt. On the other hand, no popular playwright of the period is more typical and more truly representative than he and there is no one whose works give a better and more comprehensive idea of the melodrama at its best before 1830.

The most formidable rival of Pixérécourt was Caigniez (1) Early in his dramatic career, in contrast with Pixérécourt, he had been called the Racine of the Boulevard, a title which has always been associated with his name. He first attracted the attention of Geoffroy with his Jugement de Salomon (1802) which the veteran critic commended for its imagination and the dramatic treatment of the subject. In 1807 his comedy, le Volage, ou le mariage difficile was played with much success at

(1) Caigniez was born at Arras in 1773. Before the Revolution he was a lawyer at the Court of Artois. He died at Paris in 1842. He was little known except as a melodramatist and had no literary ambitions like Pixérécourt and Cuvelier.

the Odéon and in a criticism of this play Geoffroy urged him to give up the melodrama entirely for un genre plus noble. (1) Caigniez did not follow this advice preferring to remain on the Boulevard where the audiences were less critical and success came easier. The distinguishing feature of his works is good style. Instead of the heroic melodrama of Pixérécourt, he introduced the Boulevard to plays nearer reality. The stage-fights, storming of city walls, and hand to hand combats are missing. He began the use of popular tradition for plots and his masterpiece, la Pie voleuse, which has already been described, (1) was one of the most popular plays of the period. Les Corbeaux accusateurs (1816), le Faux Alexis (1807), les Enfans du bûcheron (1807), and La Forêt d'Hermonstad (1805), which are among the best of his dramas, all show the same excellent style and well constructed plot. The brillant climaxes of Pixérécourt and the heroes and villains are less declamatory. Love, a topic which Pixérécourt shunned, plays an important role in most of Caigniez's works. The Traité du mélodrame (2) referred to him as large, onduleux, et suave. The

(1) Cf. Chap. II. p. 127.

(2) p. 76.

critics and satirists in general, found little in his personality, or in his drama, which they would ridicule. Apparently his object was to amuse rather than instruct. He wrote no prefaces in which he posed as a moral teacher nor did he anywhere take up the defense of the melodrama. He published no definitive edition of his works. A few of them were inserted in the collection entitled chefs-d'oeuvre du répertoire des mélodrames but all the others were left by him in pamphlet form. His indifference to posterity has made him less known than he deserves. Pixérécourt evidently considered him a dangerous rival for he conspicuously avoided mentioning him. Indeed le jugement de Salomon and la fée veleuse are worthy of comparison with anything the author of Latude ever wrote.

Cuvelier, (1) the third member of this triumvirate, has received his appellation as well as the other two and was known among his admirers as the

(1) Jean Guillaume Antoine Cuvelier de Tyre was born at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Before the Revolution he practiced law. In 1804 he was appointed guide and interpreter for the proposed expedition to England. He died at Paris in 1824.

Crébillon du Boulevard. He was a novelist as well as playwright and had undertaken to furnish les petites gens with both novels and plays. The very titles of his fictions, le Bandit sans le vouloir et sans le savoir (1809), l'Ours et l'enfant, ou la fille bannie (1811), Adolphe de Walden, ou l'orphelin du château (1813) show that he understood the people and catered to their tastes. During the Revolution he had been very active at the Boulevard theaters where he produced several of his short patriotic scenes such as la Fête de l'Etre suprême (1794) (1) After a number of these short plays in which revolutionary ideals or heroes were glorified he turned to pantomime dialoguée and the melodrama. C'est le diable, ou la bohémienne (1798) was one of the earliest successes in popular tragedy. The plot is so absurd that it seems scarcely possible that it should ever have been played at all. The dramatis personnae included among other characters une voix chantante, l'ombre de la mère du

(1) Cf. Chap. I, p. 63.

scène, une voix, une jeune fille de 3 ou 4 ans, ombre, démons en plaisirs et en amour. On the title we find parades et combats de J. B. A. Cuvelier. These stage-battles, which he apparently placed on the same level with the words, were always a source of pleasure to the audiences and made him popular on the Boulevard. Unlike Pixérécourt he showed no conservative tendencies, he was constantly renewing the interest in his plays. When animals became popular as actors in the melodrama, he wrote the pantomime of Saint Hubert, ou le cerf miraculeux (1814) for the Franconi Circus which stood near the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique on the Boulevard. The newspapers spoke of him as excelling in the mélodrame terrible but he attempted every variety of drama. Among the plays which increased his reputation at the popular theaters were le Chevalier noir (1792) les Hommes de la nature (1801), le Tribunal invisible, ou le fils criminel (1802), A-t-il deux femmes, ou les corsaires barbaresques (1803), and le Sacrifice d' Abraham (1816). These titles show the range of subjects in his works. Besides dramatizing his own novels he made into melodramas Modier's Jean Sbogar and

Mme de Genlis' Bélisaire. In addition to 53 popular tragedies, he wrote over a hundred pantomimes in which was the same variety of subjects. In 1817 he arranged the pantomime Roland furieux from several of the episodes in Orlando furioso and in 1818 the pantomime More de Venise, ou Othello from Shakespeare. In 1819 he devised a new form of popular entertainment, the mimodrame, which the Journal des Débats defined as un mélodrame entre-mêlé de charges de cavalerie. (1) In reality the mimodrame was a pantomime with one or two speaking parts. The Franconi Circus had obtained the privilege of a restricted use of dialogue at its performances and Cuvelier took the subject of his novel, l'Ours et l'enfant, as a plot for the first drama of this kind, to which he gave the name mimodrame. He was too active and too prolific to spend much time or pains upon his many productions and the bad taste and inanity of his work became objects of ridicule for all the critics. His deplorable language grew proverbial and the famous phrase, faignons de feindre

(1) Oct. 27, 1819.

pour mieux dissimuler, (1) has been handed down to us as an example of what he was capable of. Cuvelier added nothing to the melodrama, he took no lofty view of its mission and displayed no talent or ingenuity. In his desire for novelty he used many plots which were not suited to the Boulevard. In the hands of Cuvelier the melodrama would never have developed into serious popular tragedy.

The many other authors, who supplied the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique but who are not as well known as Pixerécourt, Caigniez and Cuvelier, may be passed over without mention. (2) The managers of the Boulevard, being indulgent and also anxious for novelty, fostered many young writers who showed some slight ability and encouraged them to try their hand at various types of melodrama. In none of these writers do we find any new characteristics, any remarkable

(1) Although this phrase has been ascribed to Cuvelier from the time of le Traite du mélodrame (1817) to the present, I have not yet been able to place it.
(2) Cf. the list of melodramatists given in Appendix II.

skill in handling a plot, or any advancement in language. Hapdé, Dupetit-Méré, Varey, Lépold, Antony, Hubert, Lemaire have all passed into oblivion as melodramatists. They wrote no worse than Pixérécourt but they came later and showed no superiority which might have taken away from the author of Coelina and Latude the right to be called the typical melodramatist.

After the authors it is necessary to discuss the actors of the Boulevards. In popular drama the actors are much more important than in classical tragedy, because they are held more responsible for the success of the play on the Boulevard than at the Comedie-Francaise. Good acting saved many a melodrama. Pixérecourt and Caigniez were confronted with a difficult problem regarding their actors. Coelina, le Chien de Montargis, le Jugement de Salomon required a new style of pantomime and declamation. The co-operation of authors and actors resulted in a new school of acting, which, after having been perfected at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique was carried by the actors themselves to the Comédie-Francaise. The

success of this new school was so great that it caused alarm to the critics. The training at the Comédie-Francaise was long and arduous and the remuneration small. Young actors from the provinces preferred the Gaîte and Ambigu-Comique where they were unrestricted by tradition and also were well paid. (1) In the end the Boulevard after having trained these provincial actors sent them to the Comédie-Francaise to interpret the plays of Hugo.

(1) Cf. Hoffman, J. B., Oeuvres, vol. X, p. 420. "Autrefois la province était une pépinière d'acteurs où le Théâtre Français prenait des sujets déjà élevés, et dont les talens éprouvés par plusieurs années d'exercice, étaient dignes de la Comédie-Francaise, et capable de réparer ses pertes. Aujourd'hui la province fournira cinquante tyrans et deux cents rois mais mais pas un seul comédien, si ce n'est que quelque invalide que le dégoût a vieilli plus encore que le temps."

The majority of the actors of the melodrama never left the Boulevard, although critics like Geoffroy often praised their acting. Tautin, for example, who played the hero roles at the Ambigu-Comique and who created the leading parts in Coelina, le Pélerin blanc, Tékéli, and other dramas of Pixérécourt, was frequently commended in the newspapers. Geoffroy never lost an opportunity of bestowing praise upon Mme. Quériau. Mlle Bourgeois created successfully many of Pixérécourt's heroines. Some of these Boulevard actors played minor roles in the dramas of Victor Hugo, which were given at the Porte-Saint-Martin. These comparatively unknown actors interest us only in that they gave some aid to the reform in acting, which took place with the advent of romantic drama.

Three of those who received their early training in melodrama are always now associated with romantic drama. Frédéric Lemaître, Mme Dorval, and Bocage, who after having been trained at the Ambigu-

Comique and the Gaîté, became the interpreters for Hugo and de Vigny. Frédéric Lemaître, known on the stage and to the members of the cénacle as Frédéric, began by playing minor parts in Pixérécourt's dramas at the Ambigu-Comique and in 1823 took the leading role of l'Homme à trois visages. Later on, he went to the Porte Saint Martin where he played Gennaro, Richard d'Ailington, and Don Cesar de Bazan. At the Théâtre de la Renaissance he won success in the title-role of Ruy Blas, and appeared at the Théâtre des Variétés in Kean. For Théophile Gautier he was the ideal romantic actor. Excelling in rapid changes from the sublime to the ridiculous he could be almost at the same time terrible et comique, élégant et trivial, féroce et tendre. Gautier, who also saw in him a combination of the geniuses of Garrick, Kemble, Macready, and especially Kean, regretted that the Comédie-Francaise did not open its doors to this great romantic actor. The poet Heine was another of his fervent admirers. Lemaître was admirably fitted for the role of Don César de Bazan by his early training. In the mélodrame comique, Robert-Macaire he had played the title

role and created on French stage the character of the philosophical tramp. Hugo wrote in the following enthusiastic manner regarding his impersonation of Don Cesar. "Quant à M. Frederic Lemaître, qu'en dire? Les acclamations de la foule le saisissent à son entrée en scène et le suivent jusqu'après le dénouement. Rêveur et profond au premier acte, mélancolique au deuxième, grand, passionné et sublime au troisième, il s'élève au cinquieme acte à un de ces prodigieux effets tragiques du haut desquels l'acteur rayonnant domine tous les souvenirs de son art. Pour les vieillards, c'est Le Kain et Garrick mêlés dans un seul homme: pour nous, contemporains, c'est l'action de Kean combinée avec l'émotion de Talma. Et puis, partout, à travers les éclairs éblouissants de son jeu, M. Frédéric a des larmes, de ces vraies larmes qui font pleurer les autres, de ces larmes dont parle Horace:

Si vis me flere, dolendum est
primum ipsi tibi

Dans Ruy-Blas, M. Frédéric a réalisé pour nous, l'idéal du grand acteur. Il est certain que toute sa vie de

théâtre, le passé comme l'avenir, sera illuminée par cette création radieuse. Pour M. Frédéric la soirée du 8 novembre 1838 n'a pas été une représentation mais une transfiguration. "(1) Allowing for the romantic wording and exaggeration of this appreciation of Victor Hugo, it still remains a convincing proof of the excellency of acting. Even after such success as this Frédéric returned to the Boulevard and shared the honors with Mme. Dorval in a revival of Ducange's 30 Ans, ou la vie d'un joueur. Both Frédéric and Mme. Dorval enjoyed the distinction of being popular on the Boulevard and at the Porte Saint-Martin, when this theater began to play romantic drama.

Mme. Dorval had also served her apprenticeship at the smaller theaters. After playing numerous unimportant roles, she began to impersonate the violent heroine in Ducange's melodramas. Jules Janin thus described the beginning of her career:

(1) Souvenirs de Frédéric Lemaître publiés par son fils, Paris, 1880: pp. 222-234.

"Il (le public) admire! il applaudit! il crie! Il venait tout simplement d'enfanter la véritable actrice (et la seule) qui put mettre au jour les drames à venir. Désormais madame Dorval existait, désormais M. Hugo, M. Alexandre Dumas et tous les autres pouvaient venir. "(1) The justification of Janin's remark is found in the large number of important roles which she created. Victor Hugo bestowed upon her the highest praise for her Marion de Lorme and it is needless to say that her friend, Alfred de Vigny was satisfied with her Kitty Bell in Chatterton. She also played with success Adèle d'Hervey in Antony. Gautier said of her acting that it was so realistic, so natural

(1) Janin, J.: Histoire de la littérature dramatique vol. VI, p. 155.

(2) Marion de Lorme, Note I: "Quant à madame Dorval, elle a développé dans le rôle de Marion toutes les qualités qui l'ont placée au rang des grandes comédiennes de ce temps; elle a eu dans les premiers actes de la grâce charmante et de la grâce touchante. Au cinquième acte, elle est constamment pathétique, déchirante, sublime, et ce qui est plus encore, naturelle."

and unaffected, that she seemed to be moving about in her own room rather than acting on the stage. " Elle a été femme là où d'autres se seraient contentées d'être actrices: jamais rien de si vivant, de si réel. "(1) At the close of romantic drama she attempted to change her style of acting and tried the title role in Pousard's Lucrèce but the realism of the melodrama had unfitted her for such a play. Her Lucretia was a failure but her Adèle, Marion, and Kitty Bell more than made up for any lack of success in portraying Ponsard's character. Had the melodrama done nothing more than train these two actors, Mme. Dorval and Lemaître it would have rendered a valuable service in preparing the way for romantic drama.

Bocage was another actor who passed from popular tragedy to the plays of Hugo and Dumas. For the former he created the role of Didier in Marion de Lorme and for the latter that of Antony in the play of the same name and of Buridan in la Tour de Nesle. Gautier found in him grace and dignity and the best representative of the romantic hero, of

(1) Gautier, M., Histoire du romanticisme, p. 274.

l'homme fatal. Victor Hugo said he had realized his ideal of the character of Didier. (1) Like Mme. Dorval he tried to enter classical tragedy but his Brutus in Lucrèce was no more of a success than her Lucretia.

Other actors, who followed the example of Frédéric, Bocage, and Mme. Dorval, never became prominent. Yet these three should have made Pixérécourt and his fellow-melodramatists proud of their pupils and Hugo, de Vigny, and Dumas grateful. It is idle to speculate upon what might have happened under different conditions but it is certainly permissible to point out that without the aid of the actors of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté the progress of romantic drama would at least have been seriously impeded.

The two theaters, which have been frequently mentioned in this discussion of the melodrama, and which rendered such service in the preparation for the romantic drama, were the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. The Porte Saint Martin, where some of Hugo's plays were first given, began as a popular theater but it was not established until long after the other two. The history of the Gaîte and the

(1) Marion de Lorme, Note. I.

Ambigu-Comique before the Revolution has already been given. (1) From 1791 until 1800 was a critical period for all the theaters for the people. The Almanach des Spectacles for 1792 said that the Gaîte, then known as the Théâtre des grands danseurs du roi, was in such an impoverished condition that it could not open its doors every day. The freedom granted to the theaters in 1791 resulted in a rapid increase in the number of theaters in Paris. The Indicateur dramatique, an VII, counted no less than 26 play-houses in the capital. Even the oldest popular theaters found it difficult to survive with so much competition. To hold their audiences they were compelled to spend large sums in scenery and costumes.

From 1800 to 1807 the two old theaters prospered and several new ones were able to be opened. The competition was still keen and the managers had to resort to various schemes for advertising new plays. Commercialism began to make itself felt in the drama and many of the tricks of managers and authors of to-day were devised on the Boulevard.

(1) p. 12 and ff.

Nicolet at the Gaîté was in the habit of giving old plays under new titles and changing the number of the performance, the twentieth being advertised as the sixth. (1) The author of a new drama would distribute tickets for the first few performances among his friends in order to assure his success. This was claimed to be necessary after the withdrawal of the soldiers from the Boulevard theaters in 1791. The Journal des Théâtres often complained about the behavior of the parterre which had grown turbulent and noisy. (2) The judgment of a popular audience was both quick and severe and the feelings of author and actors were not spared. Sometimes the performance was completely interrupted and the disturbance was quelled only upon the promise of the manager to give the box receipts to charity. In order to lengthen the performance the habit arose of giving two melodramas in the same evening, one of recent date and the other from the repertory. Political questions

(1) Almanach général des spectacles, Paris, 1791; article on the Théâtre des grands danseurs du roi.
(2) Feb. 24, 1792.

required to be handled with the greatest care. Much tact was necessary in order to discover , as Nicole Brazier expressed it, le moyen d'être calme avec la fièvre. (1) An allegory was sometimes added to the end of a melodrama and its meaning broadly hinted at. Guillaume le conquérant(1802) closed with an allegory in which Victory announced the coming of Napoléon. While these schemes of the managers succeeded in making the theaters prosperous, the authors did not receive adequate payment for their work. Brazier was indignant at this treatment of the melodramatists . " Eh bien! que pensez-vous que les hommes qui ont fait faire tant de recettes ont touché de droits d'auteurs? Je vais vous dire; on achetait alors une comédie en un acte deux cents francs, une fois payés, on donnait neuf francs par soiréepour une pièce en trois actes . Ainsi le Jugement de Salomon, Tékeli qui ont mis dans la caisse de l'administration cinquante mille écus chacun dans l'espace de quat mois, ont rapporté à leurs auteurs neuf cents francs..... heureusement que

(1) Chroniques des petits théâtres, vol. I, p. 70.

l'on a un peu change tout cela depuis quinze ans."(1) Pixérécourt, at least, showed no such miserly disposition, when he became a theatrical manager. While directing the Opéra-Comique, he succeeded in securing from its treasury a pension for one of the destitute daughters of Sedaine. (2) The managers of the Boulevard at the beginning of the melodrama, however reprehensible their methods may have been, did succeed in firmly establishing theaters entirely consecrated to popular tragedy.

The prosperity of these small theaters contrasted with the financial condition of the Comédie-Francaise. After the Revolution the number of its subscribers had greatly decreased and the actors seemed indifferent to their audiences. Geoffroy in 1804 thus spoke of the state of drama at the Comédie-

(1) op. cit., vol. I, p. 70.

(2) Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, p. 501. Sedaine's daughter, out of gratitude to Pixérécourt, gave him a manuscript of her father containing some notes on the Opéra-Comique which Pixérécourt published at the end of his Théâtre choisi, vol. IV, pp. 501-516.

Française: "Le Théâtre-Français fait quelques mouvements deux ou trois fois par semaine, seulement de peur qu'on ne l'enterre, et pour avertir le public qu'il n'est pas mort .... Jamais, à la vérité, on n'a vu le premier théâtre de la nation dans un état plus déplorable .... Passer du Théâtre Français à la Porte Saint-Martin, c'est passer d'un désert à une ville très peuplée. "(1) The sociétaires of the Comédie-Française, jealous of the success of their rivals, renewed the old war which had been carried on before the Revolution. They knew that they could rely upon the help of the Emperor, if they could convince him that the Boulevard theaters were harmful to classical tragedy. After some argument, Monvel, Fleury, and Talma persuaded Napoleon to restrict the number of theaters in Paris and in 1807 he published a decree which limited it to eight and assigned each its special genre. (2) The Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique were the only two theaters allowed to give melodrama. All the others were ordered closed within

(1) Journal des Débats, Oct. 2, 1804.

(2) Bulletin des lois, July 27, 1807.

a month. The futility of this policy of the Comédie-Francaise is self-evident. With the removal of all rivals the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique became more prosperous than ever.

From 1807 to 1814 the melodrama, although confined to two theaters, lost none of its popularity. The Comédie-Francaise was still poorly attended. According to the Opinion de parterre for 1810, the situation was then the same as before the edict of 1807. "Tandis que les grands théâtres éprouvent trop souvent une solitude désolante, en donnant d'excellentes pièces jouées par de bons acteurs, les modestes succursales du Boulevard sont assiégées tous les soirs par une multitude de spectateurs." As Geoffroy rightly said, the censor was more concerned with the money which the melodrama earned than with the pretended evil influence which it had upon the people. (1) After 1814 the restrictions upon the small theaters being removed, many new ones were built, although at

(1) Journal des Débats, July 2, 1811.

that time the nation could hardly afford them. (1) In 1838 Brazier counted thirty-eight theaters in the capital, most of which were devoted to the people. "Cela prouve" he added "que le théâtre est devenu pour nous une nécessité."(2) After 1814 the Gaîte and the Ambigu-Comique had nothing to fear from competition of any sort, because both they and their melodramas had become a necessity to Paris.

From this brief account of the melodramatists, and the actors and theaters of the Boulevard it may be seen how material conditions affected the melodrama itself. The dramatists of the Gaîte and the Ambigu-

(1) Cf. Journal des Débats, Feb. 10, 1817: "Il est assez remarquable que dans ce temps de détresse la fureur des jeux scéniques devienne tous les jours plus grande et qu'au moment ou l'on a besoin de nouveaux hospices, on ouvre de nouveaux théâtres."
(2) cf. cit., vol. II, p. 434.

Comique were quite as important in their capacity of stage-directors as in that of authors. They possessed no individuality and it would be difficult to make any clear distinction between the plays of Pixérécourt and those of many of the other popular playwrights. The style of Caigniez may possibly be considered better than that of his rivals. Pixérécourt alone believed sincerely in the moral power of the genre and Cuvelier's plays exemplified most of the undesirable qualities of popular tragedy. In regard to the actors, Frédéric Lemaître, Bocage and Mme Dorval, by their passage from the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique to the Porte Saint-Martin, where they created roles for Hugo, Dumas, and Vigny, demonstrated the excellency of the training which they had received on the Boulevard and the indebtedness of the romantic dramatists to the melodramatists who introduced into France a new school of acting. The theaters, apart from their own development and their struggles for freedom, were important, because they taught the authors of the new school methods for making their plays successful by good

staging and clever advertisement. Although the author of Hernani refrained from mentioning the melodramas of the Boulevard, he did not refuse to profit by the advances in the material conditions of the theaters due to the dramatists of the people.

Chapter V.

The Critics and the Melodrama.

The attitude of the critics of the Empire and the Restoration throws much light upon the melodrama and its relation to romantic drama. Some ignored, at least in their writings, the existence of popular tragedy, while others denied that the crude dramatic amusements of the people could have any effect upon those of a nation educated in Corneille and Racine. Whatever the attitude, the majority were most anxious to legislate the melodrama out of existence. Ridicule and satire amused the opponents of the genre but did not cause a decrease in its popularity. A few far-sighted critics did recognize that the Revolution had changed France, that this change would soon make itself felt in the literature, and that the melodrama was already pointing the way to a new form of drama.

The greater part of the critical articles on the melodrama and its significance were first publish-

ed in the newspapers and theatrical almanacs of the time. Among the former the most important is le Journal des Débats, whose feuilletons during the Empire were written by Geoffroy. Le Journal de Paris and la Gazette de France also contained articles on the popular theaters but rarely treated them with anything except contempt. The almanacs, such as the Almanach des Spectacles, Almanach des Théâtres, Opinion du Parterre, and Indicateur dramatique, published short criticisms of the more successful plays of the year. After 1791 the sudden increase in the number of theaters brought into existence many small papers, such as le Journal des Théâtres, le Censeur dramatique, le Journal des Spectacles, and le Courrier des Spectacles which were devoted primarily to theatrical news. Some of these, as for example le Courrier des Spectacles, were merely advertisements of the theaters, especially of those of the Boulevard, and their criticisms were so patently written by the managers and authors themselves and so highly complimentary that they have little value. Others were of the type of le Journal des Théâtres, a tri-weekly paper which had

been founded for the purpose of publishing serious, unprejudiced criticisms of all the theaters from the Opéra to the Gaîté. Never has there been in France a period more prolific in dramatic criticism. (1) Every one recognized that a change in the drama was to take place and all the critics hastened to attack, or defend, each new departure.

The humble origin of the melodrama prevented it from receiving serious consideration and adequate criticism. At that time in France it was difficult to admit either the existence or the influence of popular drama and the critics remained entirely indifferent to the fact that Spain and England had developed their splendid drama from the amusements of the people. Furthermore no distinction was made between the vaudeville, the parade, and similar genres of no worth whatsoever, and the melodrama. As Emile Deschamps wrote Pixérécourt in 1842, popular tragedy was 'a genre de littérature dont l'influence populaire a été grande,

(1) Cf. Des Granges, C. M.: Geoffroy et la critique dramatique, Paris, 1897, p. 106.

et qui n'a pas encore eu sa critique sérieuse. (1) Such a statement is somewhat exaggerated, for Geoffroy had at least indicated the importance of the melodrama and pointed to the part it was to play in the approaching evolution of French drama. After Geoffroy, Charles Nodier had taken up the defense of Pixérécourt and shown the value of melodrama, merely as popular drama, apart from any influence it might have upon the future history of the Comédie Francaise. With the exception of Geoffroy and Nodier, however, the critics assumed the attitude either of treating the melodrama in a facetious manner, or of denying it any importance or influence.

The honor of having discovered the melodrama and recognized its place in the development of French tragedy belongs to Geoffroy. (2) He was a staunch

(1) Pixérécourt, Théâtre choisi, vol. III, p. 3.

(2) Julien-Louis Geoffroy (1753-1814) began his career by writing for the Année littéraire. After Fréron's death he became editor and conducted the review alone for several years. His connection with certain royal-

classicist filled with unbounded admiration for the seventeenth century and his classicism was so uncompromising that he refused to consider as classical tragedy anything written after the time of Racine. Yet the authors, whose feeble imitations of classical tragedy were being killed by his satire, were amazed to find him plein d'indulgence pour des mélodrames and accused him of unreasonable inconsistency.

ist newspapers necessitated his departure from Paris during the Revolution. In 1801 he became dramatic critic for the Journal des Débats and created modern journalistic criticism of the drama as it exists at the present time. His high ideals regarding the drama and his biting satire of imitations of classical tragedy ended by making him the most feared and the most hated of the critics of his day. The actors of the Comédie-Francaise were especially bitter towards him because of his attacks upon their interpretations of classical roles. Cf. the able work of M. Des Granges upon Geoffroy, cited above, p. 308.

Unconcerned by these reproaches of his enemies he continued to devote from time to time entire articles to recent productions on the Boulevard. He refused to accept the melodrama as an importation from England or Germany and was the first to show the relation between the pre-revolutionary pantomime of Arnould and the plays of Pixérécourt and Caigniez. His criticisms, far from being disparaging were so favorable that Pixérécourt printed eight of them in extenso in his Théâtre choisi.

Geoffroy, though he praised the melodrama, carefully warned his readers not to mistake his attitude toward it. "Ils (les petits théâtres) n'ont aucun rapport avec la littérature et l'art dramatique; mais ils excitent la curiosité, ils attirent des spectateurs, et sous ce rapport, ils méritent l'attention d'un observateur, comme servant à l'histoire de l'esprit public. "(1) Having thus defined his position, he felt free to commend whatever he found that

(1) Journal de l'Empire, May 11, 1807.

pleased him at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté. In the six volumes of his feuilletons, published in 1825, there are several appreciative criticisms of plays by Pixérécourt, Caigniez, and other melodramatists. (1) For example of la Muette de Sénez, he wrote: "Voici encore une production dans le genre le plus honnête des mélodrames; une conception noble et simple, présentée avec beaucoup de naturel et de vérité, sans aucun mélange de merveilleux, et dont l'auteur s'est astreint presqu'aux mêmes règles que le poète tragique. "(2) Pixérécourt's Femmes à deux maris (1803) might, he believed, be given at the Comédie-Francaise, and, with a few changes, would be much more worthy of the first theater of France than many of the new plays which were then being given there. (3) Frédéric à

(1) Cours de littérature dramatique, ou recueil par ordre de matière des feuilletons de Geoffroy, 6 vol., Paris, 1825.

(2) Journal des Débats, 4 fructidor, an XIII. (Cours de littérature dramatique, vol. V, p. 102).

(3) Journal des Débats, Jan. 17, 1803.

Spandaw (1806) was a drame véritable, qui pourrait etre joué sur des théâtres réguliers. (1) Its music, although unnecessary, did no harm and was a pleasing addition. He claimed that there should be a revision of standards in order to judge popular tragedy. Since the melodrama made no pretention to literary excellence and did not attempt to replace classical tragedy, it should be judged with indulgence; having sacrificed all the rules for the purpose of interesting and holding the attention of the spectator, it was justified if it accomplished this, otherwise it had no excuse for existing. (2)

He explained the success of the melodrama as the result of the degeneration of classical tragedy. The imitations of Racine and the neo-classical tragedies of his contemporaries were worthless. "C'est ce qui fait que la tragédie dépérit et que le mélodrame profite, parce qu'on aime mieux s'amuser sans les règles que de s'ennuyer avec elles. "(3) He

(1) Journal des Débats, Feb. 12, 1806.

(2) Journal de l'Empire, July 2, 1811.

(3) " " " , July 13, 1811.

combatted the theory that the melodrama had corrupted tragedy. The influence of England in the eighteenth century had increased the popularity of the drame bourgeois and turned France from the enjoyment of the classic beauties of Corneille and Racine to the excess and sentimentality of English drama. The public grew dissatisfied with the lack of novelty and absence of spectacular display at the Comédie-Francaise. The melodramatists were endeavoring to cater to these acquired tastes. (1) The popular theaters, being

(1) "Il ne faut pas que ce soit le mélodrame qui ait corrompu la tragédie; c'est au contraire la corruption de la tragédie qui a fait éclore le mélodrame, et pour trouver les origines du mal, il faut remonter jusqu'au temps où l'anglomanie a dénaturé notre scène tragique .... Alors le public, blasé sur le pathétique vrai et naturel, est devenu avide de situations bizarres et forcés." Journal de l'Empire, July 11, 1811.

unaided by the State, were forced to please their audiences, unlike the Comédie-Francaise, and their efforts had been rewarded by the success of their form of tragedy.

The genuine critical ability of Geoffroy, however, is shown by his prophecy regarding the future of the melodrama. He recognized two momentous facts concerning the state of French drama at the beginning of the nineteenth century; first, that classical tragedy was moribund, and secondly that the melodrama, however far removed it might then be from literature, showed possibilities of development.(1)

(1) Cf. Journal des Débats, Jan. 17, 1803. "Il ne manque plus aux mélodrames de nos tréteaux, pour acquérir un titre littéraire, que la pompe de la représentation, l'éloquence, et la dignité du style; du reste, on y trouve plus d'invention, quelquefois plus d'intérêt, souvent autant de régularité et de vraisemblance que dans beaucoup de pièces soi-disant régulières."

The melodrama needed only a literary man, a poet to raise it from its humble position. "Si une fois il se rencontre un homme qui sache écrire en vers et en prose, dialoguer passablement, combiner et arranger des situations de théâtre des romans tant espagnols qu'anglais et allemands, c'en est fait de la tragédie légitime ..... En rendant justice à quelques situations attendrissantes de ce mélodrame, je me suis toujours étonné qu'on ne tire pas un plus grand parti de cette espèce de tragédie bâtarde, affranchie de toutes les entraves de la vraie tragédie. C'est un bonheur pour l'art dramatique qu'il ne se trouve pas de charlatans assez habiles pour profiter de ce mauvais genre pour tendre des pièges plus adroits à la sensibilité des spectateurs. "(1) Geoffroy wrote this as early as 1806, many years before the preface to Cromwell and all the other extensive literature which dealt with the subject of romantic drama. This danger to classical tragedy, which Geoffroy foresaw, seemed so imminent to him that again in 1807 he brought the sit-

(1) Journal des Débats, July 25, 1806.

uation before his readers. 'Qu'on y prenne garde, si on s'avise d'écrire les mélodrames en vers et en français, si on a l'audace de les jouer passablement, malheur au tragique. Si une fois il se rencontre un homme qui sache écrire en vers et en prose et dialoguer passablement, c'en est fait de la tragédie. Malheur au Théâtre Français, quand un homme de quelque talent et connaissant les effets de la scène, s'avisera de faire des mélodrames! Il est vrai qu'il lui faudrait en outre des acteurs capables de les exécuter: ainsi l'on peut se rassurer. Pour que le mélodrame exerce sa maligne influence au point de paralyser la tragédie, il lui manque encore deux bagatelles: des auteurs et des acteurs. "(1) 1807 was a very early date for a classicist to give such an estimate of a form of drama so foreign to his own tastes and to those of France since 1636. Unfortunately Geoffroy did not live long enough to see the fulfillment of his prophecy. In 1830 the melodrama had a poet, even several of them, and at least three actors, of whom Geoffroy

(1) Journal des Débats, April 4, 1807.

would have approved. A few years later when the quarrel was raging over the introduction of Shakespeare and romantic drama into France, some of these feuilletons of Geoffroy might have been re-read with profit.

Geoffroy stands unique among his contemporaries. However inconsistent his opinions seemed to them, they now appear perfectly logical. He was too devoted to Racine to admire Voltaire's tragedies and too keen an observer not to recognize that conditions had so changed that there could be no lasting revival of classical tragedy. In spite of his personal dislike of romantic drama and of Shakespeare, he did not persist in remaining blind to the fact that France would at some time have a free form of the drama, which would resemble the melodrama.

One of Geoffroy's successors on the Journal des Débats was Francois Benoît Hoffman who took the view of traditional, uncompromising classicist in regard to popular tragedy. In the early part of his career, when the Gothic romances were being translated,

he had written le Brigand (1795), a play filled with the absurdities of Walpole and Lewis. (1) Fourteen years after the composition of this drama he wrote an abusive article against the melodrama. Armand Charlemagne had written a satirical poem on genre, entitled le Mélodrame aux Boulevards. (2) This weak and ineffective attempt to ridicule Pixérécourt and Caigniez met with no success but it gave Hoffman, in reviewing it, an opportunity to discuss the question of the melodrama. He began trying to show the fallacy of Voltaire's adage, 'tous les genres sont bons, hors le genre ennuyeux' which the managers of the Boulevard were in the habit of citing. This doctrine, he claimed could not be applied to the melodrama, 'qui n'amuse que les sots.' The criticism continued in this tone: "Ce sont les sots qui accréditent les sottises pour avoir l'air de suivre la mode, tandis

(1) Oeuvres de F. B. Hoffman, Paris, 1829, vol. II, p. 3. cf. p.

(2) Le mélodrame aux Boulevards, facétie littéraire historique, et dramatique par Placide-le-vieux.

qu'ils ne font que se laisser aller à une pente toute naturelle. '(1) The cause of the 'succès scandaleux d'un mauvais genre ' was the subserviency of the dra - matists to the will of the people. Hoffman refused to consider the melodrama as anything beyond one of the many unfortunate results of the Revolution. In 1817 le Traîté du mélodrame, another satire upon the Boulevard, gave Hoffman a second opportunity to attack the melodrama. On this occasion he treated the que - tion in a more serious and critical manner and laid before the readers of the Journal des Débats some specific reasons as to why the melodrama was exerting a pernicious influence upon the theaters in Paris and the provinces. 'Dans quelques années les départements connaîtront mieux Calderon et Schiller que Corneille, Molière, et Racine. La tragédie et la comédie n'existent plus que dans quelques villes en très-petit nombre; elles y sont méprisées. "(2)

(1) Oeuvres des F. B. Hoffman, Vol. X, p. 404.

(2) Oeuvres de F. B. Hoffman, vol. X, p. 419.

Furthermore the Comédie-Francaise was confronted with a lack of young actors, because the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté were attracting them by offers of greater remuneration and a shorter period of training. Hoffman saw no future for French drama, nor did he share with Geoffroy the hope that perhaps the melodrama might be raised to the rank of literature. He blamed the bourgeois element which had made itself felt in the drama since Diderot. The melodrama was successful because it was economical to the spectator. "Le bon bourgeois qui veut régaler sa femme et sa fille, consulte d'abord l'économie, et lorsqu'à un prix modique, il trouve réunis dans un même lieu et dans une même pièce, la tragédie, la comédie, l'opéra, le vaudeville, les ballets, et la parade, il croit avoir ce qu'il y a de mieux dans le meilleur des mondes." (1) There were more fundamental reasons for the mixture of the genres than this superficial one given by Hoffman. Another condition of modern drama, which he deplored was the poverty of authors, who, having no royal patrons as in former times, were forced to yield to the demands of an uncritical and

(1) Cf. cit., vol. X, p. 421.

poorly educated public. Hoffman, however, never touched the more vital question of the resemblance of the melodrama to the drama of England and Germany and the possibility of its becoming a part of lite - rature. He persisted in maintaining the position of an unreasoning classicist and objected to the mere consideration of a development of the melodrama.

Charles Nodier looked upon the works of the Boulevard from a different point of view than either Geoffroy or Hoffman. In his introduction to Pixérécourt's Théâtre choisi, after explaining certain misconceptions regarding the melodrama, he emphasized its importance as popular tragedy. No one could deny its attraction for the people and never had any class of the drama been so well patronized. Pixérécourt alone counted 30,000 performances of his 120 plays and even one play, le Chien de Montargis, was given 1158 times. (1) This popularity of the melodrama was a fact which its opponents could not ignore. Nodier agreed with Pixérécourt as to its

(1) Cf. Théâtre choisi, vol. I, p. XLIV, Tableau chronologique de mes pièces.

moral influence and, as has been mentioned already, (1) contended that it had brough about a decrease in crime. Nodier, however, carefully defined his position as an apologist of the melodrama: "Il n'est pas question ici de l'apologie du melodrame considéré comme ouvrage d'art. "(2) Yet he frankly admitted that these popular tragedies of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté did have some relation to romantic drama: "la tragédie et le drame de la nouvelle école ne sont guère autre chose que des mélodrames relevés de la pompe artificielle du lyrisme. " (3) But since there had been so much criticism of the mélodrama from the standpoint of literature, Nodier made some reply to those who were repeating arguments against popular tragedy, because of its demoralizing influence upon the drama in general. Nodier marvelled at Pixérécourt's skill and ingenuity in fitting his plays to the needs and the intelligence of his audiences. He confessed that the style of the melodrama was over-emphatic, bombastic, and faulty in many respects but he added that for

(1) p. 161

(2) op. cit. p. VII.

(3) " " p, XIII.

a number of years his contemporaries had no right to be too particular in this matter of style. "Après tout le style du mélodrame n'est pas aussi répréhen - sible que le prétendent aujourd'hui des gens qui n'ont jamais eu de style d'aucune espèce. Il a ses excuses et peut-être ses avantages. "(1) Nodier also took occasion to recall that Pixérécourt had shown much talent in creating the traditions of the genre. The acting, the costuming, the scenery had been brought to a high degree of perfection within a very short space of time.

This favorable attitude of Charles Nodier to the melodrama is partly explained by his romanticism and partly by the fact that he had lived to see the triumph of romantic drama. Moreover his introduction to Pixérécourt's works was written only three years before les Burgraves and he had seen the prose dramas of Hugo where there is a more striking resemblance to the melodrama than in Hernani and Ruy Blas. The attitude toward the literature

(1) op. cit., p. XIV.

of the folk had greatly changed since the first decade of the nineteenth century and popular tragedy, as an expression of the ideals of the humble classes, was no longer to be despised. Charles Nodier's sympathetic criticism of the melodrama undoubtedly contributed much toward bringing later critics to a more rational view of the plays of the Boulevard.

In addition to these three critics, Geoffroy, Hoffman, and Nodier, there were many satirists who attacked the melodrama with a weapon which has always been powerful in France. Of all the many satires against Pixérécourt and the other playwrights of the Boulevard the cleverest and best known was le Traîté du mélodrame par MM. A! A! A! Quérard interprets the 3 A's as Abel Hugo, the brother of the poet, Armand Malitourne, a journalist, and J. J. Adler, an unimportant writer of comedies. (1) The pamphlet was full of witty satire, which was sometimes directed against other people besides the melodramatists. For example the authors stated: "On a

(1) Supercheries litteraires dévoilées, Paris, 1869.

fait du mélodrame en littérature, en administration, en monumens, en politique surtout." There is little in the whole pamphlet which shows us anything concerning the melodrama beyond the fact that it was so popular and interesting as to become an object of satire. In general there is too much humor to admit of any serious remarks which might throw some light upon the history or development of the genre. Take, for example, the plan of the melodrama given as follows: "On placera un ballet et un tableau général dans le premier acte; une prison, une romance et des chaines dans le second; combats, chansons, incendie, etc., dans le troisième et le tyran sera tué à la fin de la pièce, la vertu triomphera et le chevalier devra épouser la femme innocente, malheureuse, etc. On terminera par une exhortation au peuple, pour l'engager à conserver sa moralité, à détester le crime et les tyrans, et surtout on lui recommandera d'épouser de préférence des femmes vertueuses." (1) Most of the hundred pages of this satire are filled with similar comments, which really did not hinder the progress of the melodrama

(1) p. 9.

but did vex Pixerécourt. (1) One passage is particularly interesting when we remember that Abel Hugo was one of the three authors. Advice is given for making a first performance successful. "Un principe bien important est celui de peupler la salle, à la première représentation, de gens de lettre, capables de faire sentir fortement le mérite de l'ouvrage. Sans leur secours tout chef-d'oeuvre ne bat que d'une aile."(2) If Abel Hugo's brother had not followed this advice, the twenty-fifth of February, 1830, might not have been the success that it was. Indeed much of the satire which in le Traîté du mélodrame was directed against the melodrama might have been equally well applied to the dramas of Hugo and Dumas.

One of the earliest, as well as the bitterest enemies of the Boulevard was Fabien Pillet, who is quite unknown save for a number of theatrical almanachs which he published during the last decade

(1) Cf. Pixerécourt's reply mentioned above, p. 277.

(2) op. cit., p . 13.

of the eighteenth century and the first part of the Empire and which were often quoted at that time. Even during the Revolution he entertained grave fears for French drama, if popular tragedy were allowed to continue. The frontispiece to his Melpomène et Thalie vengées, written in the year VII, pictures Tragedy and Comedy about to be crushed by the Drame behind whom were "les différents personnages qui figurent dans les pièces modernes, tels que le Moine, Victor, Robert, la Nonne sanglante, Montoni, Frédégilde, etc. Chacun de ces personnages est indiqué par le costume qu'ils portent au théâtre." In his almanacs Fabien Pillet devoted each year a few pages to a description of the new plays which had appeared at the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté and in these few pages he expressed his utter hatred of the melodrama and attacked the leading authors. He gave no reasons for his antipathy but assumed that all Paris, with the exception of the uneducated, agreed with him that the theaters of the Boulevard should be closed. Yet even he confessed that the

mise en scène, at this early date, equalled that of the Comédie-Française. Pillet carried his abuse of the melodrama so far that he attacked the actors but he was promptly horse-whipped into silence by some of the actresses of the Boulevard who were angered by his personal remarks.

Several satires of the melodrama appeared in verse. One of these, le Mélodrame au Boulevard (1809) by Armand Charlemagne was the subject of a review by Hoffman which has already been mentioned.(1) Like the authors of le Traîté du mélodrame, Charlemagne had a few passages of good satire. For example in the following speech of the prince des mélodrames we have a parody of Pixérécourt and his theories:

"Messieurs, je ne connais, soit dit de bonne foi,
Que deux originaux, monsieur Kotzebue et moi;
Tous les deux nous avons brisé les fers antiques,
Et secoué le joug des règles dramatiques.
Je suis d'un genre neuf l'inventeur principal;
J'ai su donner au peuple un spectacle moral
Qui l'instruit, qui l'amuse, et tout fait pour l'enfance

(1) Cf. p. 219.

Et
n'est point au dessus de son intelligence."
The rest of le Mélodrame au Boulevard contained nothing worthy of mention and the whole poem was an unsuccessful attempt to heap ridicule upon popular tragedy. Twenty years later Dupuis Dumarsais wrote an equally unsuccessful rimed satire, entitled Garde à vous, ou le cri de la sentinelle aux théâtres de Paris.

All of these criticisms and satires point very clearly to the fact that the importance and influence of the melodrama was recognized not only on the Boulevard but throughout Paris and France and they also showed the same conservatism which we find in the attacks made upon Henri III et sa cour and Hermani. Nodier's article in defense of the genre came long after the critics had ceased to be concerned about the dramatic activity of the Boulevard, so that up to the beginning of romantic tragedy Geoffroy, by his recognition of the possibilities of melodrama, stands quite alone.

Unfortunately there was no one among the melodramatists capable of answering the attacks

of Hoffman, Charlemagne, and the authors of le Traîte du mélodrame. We have already seen that of all the melodramatists, Pixerécourt alone was troubled by these attacks of the critics. (1) Lacking Geoffroy's or Hoffman's knowledge of the history of the drama and the wit of the authors of le Traîte du mélodrame, he was unable to make a satisfactory reply to the critics. Besides his general defense of the genre in his Guerre au mélodrame and his article in the Livre des Cent-et-un, (2) which we have already discussed, both of these articles contained refutations of certain statements which had been made regarding the baneful influence of the melodrama. He called attention to the advantage which his opponents had over him, in having access to the newspapers, which refused to print his articles in defense of his plays. Consequently he was forced to publish Guerre au mélodrame at his own expense. In reply to the complaint of literary men

(1) p. 276

(2) p. 279

that tragedy and comedy were being driven out of Paris, he pointed to the indolence of the Comédie-Francaise. "Que les grands théâtres suivent l'exemple des petits, qu'ils donnent fréquemment des nouveautés, qu'ils fassent de constans efforts pour attirer le public, celui-ci répondra à leur appel.(1) When the Comédie-Francaise and the Odéon gave new plays, they were always crowded. Therefore the falling off in attendance at the large theaters was in no wise the fault of the Boulevard. As to the corruption of the provinces, which Hoffman argued to be a result of the popularity of the Boulevard plays, Pixerécourt proved by statistics that for the years 1815 and 1816 only a third of the plays given in the provinces were melodramas. In reply to the critics who, while admitting that crime was always punished on the Boulevard du crime, objected to the continual presentation of vice, Pixérécourt cited several examples from plays given at the large theaters, which were not morally elevating. "Les auteurs

(1) Guerre au mélodrame, p. 20.

du mélodrame n'ont pas encore osé faire étouffer un personnage sous les coussins comme je l'ai vu au théâtre Favart en 1786 dans un drame, intitulé Novogorod sauvé, ou sous un matelas, comme je l'ai vu dans Othello in 1792. "(1) And regarding the style of the melodramatists, he insisted that it was neither better nor worse than that of Mercier and Sedaine. No one quoted the latter as a model of style and yet he became a member of the Academy. Even the critics themselves must have acknowledged that there was some truth in these statements of Pixerécourt and that the so-called decadence in dramatic art was due in part to causes other than the popularity of the melodrama.

In 1825 another reply to the critics was published by the anonymous editor of les Chefs-d'oeuvre du répertoire des mélodrames, which was a collection of successful plays in twenty volumes. To this unknown writer, all the attacks on the melodrama, based on the argument of its injuring classical tragedy, seemed unwarranted. "Laissons crier

(1) op. cit. p. 21.

tant qu'ils voudront de prétendus beaux esprits sans profondeur, contre le mélodrame .... Seraient-ils assez aveugles pour ne pas voir que le genre du mélodrame n'a rien de commun avec le beau idéal de la tragédie en vers, de la haute comédie, de l'opéra-comique ou sérieux, et du grand opéra? Il n'y a ici aucun envahissement à craindre; les lignes de démarcation sont bien prononcées. "(1) In the novel it was generally admitted that the works of Ducray-Duminil and Mme. Cottin were sufficiently removed from literature to exert no influence upon it. Certainly the distance between le chien de Montargis and la Pie voleuse, and classical tragedy was equally great. Fabien Pillet and Hoffman could not have meant that Racine and Corneille were being deserted for the ephemeral and commonplace productions of the Boulevard.

Before leaving the question of the melodrama and its critics some brief mention should be made of satirists of the genre who were themselves authors of the Boulevard. Even the audiences of the Gaîté

(1) op. cit., vol. I, p. II.

and the Ambigu-Comique appreciated a humorous parody of a well-known popular tragedy. Just as Hernani was parodied several times, so the works of Pixerécourt and Caigniez were often caricatured. Tékéli was turned into an amusing farce entitled Kékéli. In 1805 the Gaîté played the following parody, of which the sub-title suggests the contents, Rodéric et Cunégonde, ou l'Hermite de Montmartre, ou la forteresse de Moulinos, ou le revenant de la galerie de l'ouest, galimatias burlesco-mélopatho-dramatique, en 4 actes, sans entre-actes, orné de costumes analogues, soutenu par 4 changements de décors, lardé de combats et d'enlèvements, enjolivé de cavernes et de voleurs, égayé par un fantôme et réchauffé par un incendie. This long title would not have been inappropriate for many an early play of the Boulevard in 1808. Martainville wrote a short act for the re-opening of the Gaîté, entitled le Mariage du mélodrame et de la Gaîté, in which the Gaîté, personified by a young, innocent woman, is courted by various suitors including comedy, vaudeville, etc., and is finally won by

a sad and gloomy knight representing the melodrama. The knight makes his first appearance upon the stage surrounded by ghosts, devils, and other familiar characters. Farces and parodies, such as these,were often played on the Boulevard but had no effect upon the melodrama. Although the audiences were amused by them, they still remained faithful to Pixérécourt and Caigniez.

From this account of the criticism and satire of the melodrama we see how all the critics, with the exception of Geoffroy and Nodier, failed to understand the proper place of the melodrama. There was a failure to recognize the necessity of a form of tragedy suited to the intelligence of the people and there were exaggerated fears regarding the future of the Comédie-Francaise, if the Boulevard theaters, continued to increase in popularity and influence. Geoffroy, however, estimated with great fairness both the real worth and the future development of the genre, while Nodier defended it as a suitable expression of the ideals of the people who had gained the freedom of their theaters at the time of the Revolution.

Chapter VI.

The Melodrama in its relation to Romantic Drama.

All the literary critics, who have touched upon the subject of the melodrama, have considered it in its relation to romantic drama. The contemporaries of Pixérécourt, as we have already seen, felt that it was exerting an influence upon French drama. There was some disagreement as to whether this influence was good or bad and as to what its results would be but practically all writers granted that the rise of popular tragedy was changing the conditions of the theater and the tastes of the audiences. And by audiences it was meant those of the Comédie-Française as well as those at the Gaîté and the Ambigu-Comique. Just before the fall of les Burgraves Nodier had defined romantic drama as melodrama in verse. Within recent years Brunetière and M. Des Granges (1) have

(1) p. XIII and p. XIV.

called attention to the similarity of the plays of the Boulevard and those of Hugo and Dumas and have claimed that the former prepared the way for the latter. On the other hand Victor Hugo, the champion of the new school, made no reference to the efforts of Pixérécourt and Caignie**x** and by this silence implied that he was in no way indebted to the popular playwrights.

In all the discussions which have centered around romantic drama, there has always been a lack of definitions and also a disagreement as to what were the essential characteristics of the drama of 1830. M. Doumic claims that we can give no positive definition, that is, we must always describe it in negative terms. Even the romanticists represented themselves as in revolt against the dramatic system of classical tragedy. They did not observe the rule of the unities, they did not retain the style noble, they did not separate tragedy and comedy. The Preface to Cromwell was a manifesto of revolt rather than a constructive treatise. The Preface to Hernani demanded the right to ignore the fixed

rules of the seventeenth century. A comparison of Hugo with Shakespeare and Schiller shows that the romanticists did not make use of all the liberty which they found in the tragedy of England and Germany. "Hugo a assagi Shakespeare et modéré Schiller," writes a recent critic of the romantic drama, who also adds that Hugo is 'une facon de Shakespeare retouché par Corneille. (1) The Cid and Phèdre still remain complete and satisfying expressions of the genius of the French and even the reformers of the nineteenth century were unable to escape the influences of these models. Literary conservatism has always had such a hold upon the nation that traditions in every branch of literature have never been abruptly set aside. Even Pixérécourt, writing for the folk, prided himself that his works were not too far removed from classical tradition. Likewise the romanticists in spite of their protests, showed by their practice that they were loath to forsake entirely the rules of Boileau.

The melodrama, however, was not in the line

(1) Nebout, P.. le Drame romantique, p. 125.

of literary tradition but thoroughly popular in its origin, development, and fundamental characteristics. A few centuries previous the drama of the people might have developed into a literary form as it did in England and Spain but since 1636 tragedy in France shows very little trace of popular influence. Circumstances have favored tragedy in resisting this influence. The standards of judgment and the success of each play have, with few exceptions, been in the hands of the educated, conservative class. Moreover the history of French tragedy is mainly confined to one theater always controlled by the aristocracy or the educated. Therefore it seems impossible that even the most enthusiastic romanticists should have consciously, or unconsciously, come under the influence of the melodrama. The characters, the situations, and the motives of action in popular tragedy are so distinctly those of the folk that, the authors and the spectators of the Comédie-Française regarded them as absolutely foreign.

However far removed from one another were

the traditions of the Comédie-Française and the theaters of the Boulevard, there was a striking resemblance between romantic drama and the melodrama. In fact there were so many points of resemblance that after the first performance of Hernani the press did not hesitate to call Hugo's play a melodrama. In le Journal des Débats we read the following estimate of the real worth of the first romantic drama in verse: "On peut aller voir Hernani: la pompe du spectacle, la richesse des costumes, le jeu des acteurs et de Mlle Mars, qui dans ce genre, est pourtant inférieure à Mme Dorval, peuvent faire illusion aux spectateurs. Tout ce prestige se dissipe à la lecture: il ne reste qu'un mélodrame dont l'action est dépourvue de vraisemblance, où la pensée est tantôt triviale, tantôt alambiquée, dont le langage est d'une incorrection et d'une barbarie choquantes, et qui, par-dessus tout, est d'un ennui mortel."(1) Le Constitutionel found Hernani nothing but a character from the Boulevard. "Hénani n'est autre d'abord

(1) March 12, 1830.

qu'un brigand, un chef de bandits vivant dans les montagnes et exploitant les grandes routes. (1) Even staunch friends of Hugo, like Théophile Gautier, recognized that Hernani and Ruy Blas in prose would be very near melodrama. In 1838, on the occasion of the opening of the Théâtre de la Renaissance with a performance of Ruy Blas, Gautier gave this advice to the romanticists. "Continuez mais, surtout, pas de prose! des vers, et encore des vers! il faut laisser la prose aux boutiques du boulevard; des poètes, pas de faiseurs; il n'y a pas besoin d'ouvrir un nouvel état pour les fournitures de ces messieurs; il faut bien que la fantaisie, le style, l'esprit, la poésie aient un petit coin pour se produire dans cette vaste France qui se vante d'être le plus intelligent pays du monde, dans ce Paris qui se proclame lui-même le cerveau de l'univers, nous ne savons trop pourquoi; il y a bien assez de dix-huit théâtres pour le mélodrame et le vaudeville." (2) Hugo's prose dramas presented greater

(1) Feb. 27, 1830.

(2) L'Art dramatique en France depuis 25 ans (19 nov. 1838).

difficulties for the apologist of romanticism; their extravagances and exaggerations were hard to defend. When Mlle Georges played Lucrèce Borgia at the Porte Saint-Martin in 1837, hostile critics had held up to ridicule those features which even so well-known to the Boulevard during the last part of the Revolution. "La critique s'est beaucoup acharnée sur les cercueils, la croix noire, les moines voilés et tout l'attirail fantastique du dénouement. "(1) Gautier did not attempt to defend this last act of Lucrèce Borgia and only replied that its puerilities were compensated for by the beauty of other scenes. The scene in the first act he considered to be unsurpassed. Among modern French critics there is less indulgence for the weakness of romantic drama. M. Faguet, who discerns in some of Shakespeare nothing but melodrama, makes a similar judgment of Hugo's Angelo. In fact he can hardly realize that this play was intended for anything more than a parodie du théâtre du boulevard de ces temps-là. Every act teems with commonplaces familiar to the audiences of the

(1) Gautier, T., cf. Cit. vol. I, p. 75.

Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté. When M. Faguet meets with the melodramatic exaggerations and the absurdities of Angelo, the 'portes secrètes,' 'les escaliers mystérieux,' 'les hommes qui marchent dans les murs,' 'les poisons,' 'les narcotiques,' 'enterrée vivante,' 'croix de ma mère,' 'faire ta prière,' 'une heure,' 'ma vengeance,' he cannot take the play seriously. Every one will certainly agree with M. Faguet that, not only in Angelo but in all of the prose dramas of Hugo, there is a false note, an abuse of antithesis, and too frequent recourse made to the facile methods of the Boulevard, but at the beginning of the twentieth century there is also undoubtedly a consensus of opinion that much of the literature of the romantic movement shows the same defects. M. Petit de Julleville finds in the dramas of Victor Hugo and Pixérécourt, the same lack of psychological analysis and development and the same characters. (1) In romantic drama there is invariably the hero, the heroine, the villain, and the buffon, represented in Ruy Blas, for example, by

(1) Le Théâtre en France, p. 359.

Ruy Blas, the queen, don Salluste, and don Cesar de Bazan. The origin of these four typical characters is traced by M. Petit de Julleville to the four principal personages of the melodrama. This dependence of romantic drama upon popular tragedy has been affirmed so frequently and by such authoritative critics that it has been generally accepted.

In the course of our discussion of the works of Pixérécourt and Caigniez many of the minor resemblances between them and romantic drama have been commented upon. For instance Hugo used effectively music and dancing just as the popular playwrights did. (1) In the second act of Ruy Blas, la chanson des lavandières brings an indescribable joy of freedom and happiness into the scene. To set off the spectre's appearance in the last act of Hernani, it requires the music and dancing and certainly there is no greater climax

(1) It must be granted, however, that Hugo in reading Shakespeare and Goethe had been able to imagine the effect of this incidental music and dancing but at the Boulevard theaters he had probably seen a practical demonstration of it.

in any romantic play than that of the third act of Lucrèce Borgia, when the ribald song of Gubetta is interrupted by the chant of the penitents. (1) Like the melodramatists, Hugo divided his prose dramas into three acts. In both romantic drama and melodrama there is that absence of dramatic necessity so characteristic of Greek tragedy and of that of the seventeenth century in France. Each act is over-crowded with events and the dénouement is not a logical sequence. The characters and the situations of Dumas and Hugo show the same remoteness from reality. The same style of acting was required for romantic drama as for the Boulevard tragedies; thus we might recall many of these characteristics of the melodrama which appear in the plays of the romanticists.

There are important differences, however,

(1) When Hugo desired a composer for the chanson des lavandières, he could find no one better fitted for writing this music than Piccini, the musician who had been so often associated with Pixérécourt.

which prevent us from accepting the view that all these resemblances were the result of influence. Shakespeare and the English drama contained all of the features which are common to popular tragedy and romantic drama and there is no doubt as to the familiarity of the dramatists of the early part of the nineteenth century with the Elizabethan play and its structure. The romanesque details of Hernani, Ruy Blas, and Lucrèce Borgia came mainly from the poetry of Byron and to some extent from that of Goethe. The melodrama founded on the Gothic romance with all its mystery, its sentimentality, and its ghosts, had almost entirely disappeared from the Boulevard before the end of the first decade of the century and consequently Hugo and Dumas could never have seen this type but Byron's poetry, the Giaour the Corsair, Child-Harold, and Don Juan brought to France characters and episodes no less ridiculous than those of the Mysteries of Udolpho and the Monk. The beauties of this English poetry, its lyricism and imagination completely blinded the men of 1830 to the triteness and absurdity of its subject matter. Byron coupled this extravagance and

these romanesque settings with a literary doctrine. In Anne Radcliffe and Lewis the pirates and out-laws have no meaning, no interest beyond themselves, in Schiller they have a political signification, but in Byron they become the symbol of the author-hero, rebelling against classicism and struggling for freedom in art and literature. This Byronic hero, this prototype of Hernani, Ruy Blas and all the other similar figures of romantic drama, brings with him the ideal of romanesque love to which everything in life is sacrificed. And here is an important difference between the playwrights of the Boulevard and Hugo, the former were never concerned with the question of love. M. Petit de Julleville's theory of the origin of the four principal characters in the plays of Hugo, which has been mentioned above, may now be examined from the point of view of the importance of love. The niais of Pixérecourt corresponds to the buffon of Hugo but the other three characters and their relations to one another are entirely different on the Boulevard, because love is absent. Another

important difference between Pixérecourt and Hugo is the lyricism of the latter. All the plays of Hugo have lost their attraction on the stage; they have become closet dramas quite as much as Hamlet, and the beauty of the lyric passages of Hernani and Ruy Blas are better appreciated when read. If we take away from romantic drama its poetry and this theory of love, there is nothing left except the antithesis, which was quite absent in the melodrama. Consequently three of the most characteristic features of Hugo's dramas, poetry, the romantic ideal of love, and antithesis, can by no possible means be derived from popular tragedy. Even the romanesque details at the Comédie-Française and the Porte Saint-Martin differ from those of the Boulevard.[5] There are only a few secret passages and sliding panels in Hugo but poison is every where present; Hernani and Dona Sol drink poison, Angelo tries to poison his wife and Lucretia attempts to do the same to all the members of a supper party. On the Boulevard poison was unknown because the audiences would have found it impossible to understand how Providence could have allowed the wicked

to use so powerful a weapon. The use of poison seems less strange among the exceptional characters and the extraordinary situations of romantic drama. In the melodrama both the personages and their surroundings are natural and familiar to the audience. Romantic drama was written with an artistic purpose for the esoteric few, who understood the suffering of Werther and René while the melodrama with its sanguine optimism and simple unsophisticated morality appeal to the ordinary man of little education, who refused to admit the sacrifice of a moral principle for artistic reasons.

Some critics have been misled into over-emphasizing the importance of the melodrama, because there seemed to be a break in the development between the end of the eighteenth century and 1830. Yet there is no necessity for this, romantic drama was a natural out-growth of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even in classical tragedy, in Racine for example, we see the germs of romantic drama. In the eighteenth century Ducis, Voltaire, Diderot, Mercier, Du Belloy, all aided in the preparation for Dumas and Hugo.

The semi-romantics, who wrote before 1830, such as Lemercier, Lebrun, Soumet, and Casimir Delavigne continued the work of the previous century and made still greater deviations from the classical models. But all of these authors were rebelling against a literary tradition. Lemercier's Pinto was described by the Courrier des Spectacles as a play in which la pudeur et la décence sont scandaleusement blessées, (1) not because of its morals but because of the dramatic system upon which it was constructed. Hugo triumphed at the Comédie-Francaise, because he came after the way had been prepared by many innovators. Moreover he wrote better verse than any of his immediate predecessors. Even if the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté had never existed, if Caigniez had never left his law books and Pixérécourt had continued to paint fans for the rest of his life, the dramatic system of Hugo would have been quite the same. There would have been the same confusion of the genre, the same abandonment of the unities and the elevated tragic style, and the same theory of

(1) 4 Germinal, an VIII.

the grotesque.

The melodrama, however, did play some role in the preparation for romantic drama. Since no branch of literature is more dependent upon the material conditions under which it is presented than the drama, any significant change in these means a new development. For example the exclusion of the spectators from the stage, which took place during the eighteenth century, was a great step forward towards romanticism. Now the service which the melodrama rendered to Hugo and Dumas was a general betterment of material conditions. The advances which the melodramatists made in staging their plays and in the costuming helped the romanticists very much. The Boulevard trained the actors who became the most successful interpreters of Hugo and Vigny. Hugo also learned from the popular playwrights the trick of making his first performances successful. While it is possible that the romantic dramatists may have made other slight borrowing from the melodrama, there are none of the essential characteristics and features of Hernani, Ruy Blas, Henri III et sa cour, and

Chatterton which cannot easily be explained as the result of the development of tragedy before 1870 and of the influence of Shakespeare.

In attempting to show the dependency of romantic drama upon the melodrama, a parallel has often been drawn between tragi-comedy and the popular tragedy of the nineteenth century. It has been shown that the political conditions which preceeded the reign of each genre are almost identical. After the religious wars of the sixteenth century the nobles demanded in their theatrical performances the same false and exaggerated sentiment as the people who had passed through the Terror. Horror, mystery, and the reward of virtue, together with an exciting and interesting plot are as characteristic of tragi-comedy as of the melodrama. In both there is freedom of form and a happy ending. But the important difference between the two is that in the case of tragi-comedy, the genre disappeared, when classical tragedy developed out of it, whereas the melodrama still continued after the advent of romantic drama and was in no way affected by it. The audiences, who had applauded

Gésippe and Frégonde changed their tastes with the arrival of Corneille but the Boulevard of to-day still remains faithful to melodrama in practically the same form as in the days of Pixérécourt and Caigniez.

Even if the influence which the melodrama exerted upon romantic drama is limited to a betterment of material conditions of the theater, the importance of the melodrama is by no means minimized. The popular tragedy which arose during the Revolution offers an excellont illustration of the truth of Etienne's remark, 'le théâtre est l'expression de la société.' Pixérécourt, with the aid of Caigniez and Cuvelier, gave France a form of drama admirably suited to the needs of the people. These early melodramatists soon brought popular tragedy to such perfection that their plays went abroad where they won the same success as on the Boulevard. The history of the early melodrama has afforded us some interesting examples of the literary conservatism in France. On the one hand a few of the playwrights of the Boulevard endeavored to retain as many of the unities as possible and on the other hand the critics persisted in judging the productions

of the Ambigu-Comique and the Gaîté by the same standards which they applied to classical tragedy. Since Henry III et sa cour and Hernani the melodrama has made few advances and remains to-day essentially what it was during the first few decades of the nineteenth century. There have been no better written plays than le Chien de Montargis and le Jugement de Salomon. Dumas, père, finally forsook romantic drama for the melodrama and furnished the people long, exciting plays such as la Tour de Nesle, while Dennery wrote les deux Orphelines which has become the most popular and the most universally known melodrama in all Europe and America. The tragedies of the Boulevard have now ceased to attract the attention of the critics, who, unlike their predecessors of a hundred years ago, see no danger of the popular theaters injuring French drama and reducing the audiences at the Comédie Française. Time has dealt more gently with a few of the master-pieces of early melodrama than it has with the best of the romantic dramas. Hernani and Ruy Blas, as plays, have merely an extrinsic interest

due to their place in the development of the drama of the nineteenth century but Pixérécourt's Latude still has an intrinsic value to the Boulevard au - diences of to-day.

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

LIST OF [illegible] DRAMATISTS (1)

Antony (?).(2)

Antié, Benjamin.

Aude, J.

Augustin, pseudonym for J.H.A. Ducré.

(1) In this list are included the names of the following, authors whose melodramas were printed in the collection entitled, Chef-d'oeuvres du répertoire des mélodrames, the more important of the melodramatists whose melodramas are mentioned in Duval's Dictionnaire des ouvrages dramatiques and all other melodramatists whose plays have been examined for this monograph.

(2) The use of the question mark after a name indicates either that it is a pseudonym which has not yet been identified, or the name of a man of whom nothing is known not even his initials.

Barouillot (?).

Bernard-Valville(?).

Bernos, Alex.

Benjamin, pseudonym for L. Antié.

Blanchard, P.

Boirie, E.C. de.

Bouilly, J. Nic.

Bourlain, J.Aud.

Brahain, Vic, H.J.

Caigniez, L.C.

Carmouche, P.Fr.Ad.

Camberousse, F.I.H.

Chaussier, Hector.

Coffin-Rony (?).

Corsse, L.

Cuvelier de Trie, J.G.A.

Dela croix (?).

Dinaux (1).

(1, Dinaux is said to have used the pseudonym used by two authors, the name of one beginning with 'din' and the name of the other ending with 'aux.'

Dunangé, pseudonym for Bourlain.

Dumersan, T.I.

Dumoniant, pseudonym for Bouhain.

Dupetit-Méré, F.

Ferrand(?).

Fournier(?).

Franconi, A.

Frédéric, pseudonym for Dupetit-Méré.

Guesdon, Alex.F.

Guillaume(?).

Hapdé, J.B. Augustin.

Hinaux(?).

Hubert, Ch.

Hyacinthe (?).

Lacoste Armand.

Lamarteillère, J.H.F.

Laroche, P.J.de.

Laqueyrie (?).

Lefranc(?).

Lemaire, H.

Lemaître, F.

Louisel de Trégate, J.B.

Martainville, A .

Matthias (?).

Melchior(?).

Merle, J.F.

Noel, P.J.

Paulyanthe, pseudonym for Antié.

Perrin(?).

Plancher de Valcour, P.A.L.P.

Poujol, A.

Polyanthe, same as Paulyanthe.

Redon-Desmarpelles (?).

Redon, M. de.

Ribié, C.

Saint-Armand pseudonym for Armand Lavoie.

Saint-Aubin(?).

Servières, J.

Victor pseudonym for Ducharge.

Varez, E.F.

Vilhiers, pseudonym for Plancher de Valcour.

LIFE.

Born at Portland, Me., June [illegible], 1[illegible], I was edu-
cated in the public schools and graduated from Harvard
with the degree of A. B. in 1902. I then spent two
years abroad, studying at the Universities of Grenoble
and Berlin. In 1907 I entered the Romance Department
of the Johns Hopkins University, taking French as a
principal subject, Italian and Spanish as first and
second subordinate subjects. Since 1909 I have been
instructor in Romance Languages at Cornell University.

I would express to Professors Armstrong, Ogden,
Brush, Shaw, Marden and Doctor Keidel my appreciation
of their comprehensive courses in the Romance languages
and literatures. To the late Professor Elliott I am
profoundly grateful for his sympathetic guidance and
encouragement in all my studies.

James Frederick Mason

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Mason, James Frederick
THE MELODRAMA IN FRANCE FROM THE REVOLUTION TO
THE BEGINNING OF ROMANTIC DRAMA, 1791-1830

Ph. D. Diss. 1911

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